

THE
ROMANCE OF CASANOVA

Also by
RICHARD ALDINGTON

Novels

DEATH OF A HERO
THE COLONEL'S DAUGHTER
ALL MEN ARE ENEMIES
WOMEN MUST WORK
VERY HEAVEN
SEVEN AGAINST REEVES
REJECTED GUEST

Biography

WELLINGTON

3

THE ROMANCE OF CASANOVA

A Novel By

RICHARD ALDINGTON



WILLIAM HEINEMANN LTD
LONDON :: TORONTO

FIRST PUBLISHED 1946



ET 01
mf 4

ST82



ALLAMA IQBAL LIBRARY



1082

~~823
AD 3 K~~

F
Acd/R

THIS BOOK IS PRODUCED IN COMPLETE
CONFORMITY WITH THE AUTHORISED
ECONOMY STANDARDS

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN AT THE WINDMILL PRESS
KINGSWOOD, SURREY

THE ROMANCE OF CASANOVA

PROLOGUE

THE tall old man wrapped in a handsome but very faded pelisse muttered a contemptuous reply to the surly: "Guten abend, Herr Casanova," of Count Waldstein's door-keeper. Nothing cuts an old man's vanity more sharply than the insolence of menials. Casanova knew—or thought he knew, which was just as bad—that the Waldstein servants despised him because he lived on their master's patronage, and hated him because he tried to keep up the airs and graces of an eighteenth-century gentleman. This fellow was sneering at him, sneering at Giacomo Casanova, knight of Seingalt by his own scanty grace, knight of the Golden Spur by the infinite grace of the Pope's Holiness! Time was when a look like that on a lackey's face would have brought a clout on the head from the Chevalier's clouded cane. . . .

He tried to hurry away across the frozen snow of the inner courtyard, but the irascible old man's slackened muscles refused to obey the impatient messages of his brain. Age—how he hated it! Winter—how he hated that too, the old age of the year, with its sullied snow and grey sky and breath-cutting wind! Hateful.

With walls between him and cruel winter old Casanova felt better. He even tried unconsciously to put on a little of the old conquering swagger as he made his way to his own particular lair in the castle library, through the suites of what was a grim museum of the "great" and ferocious Wallenstein. Hurrying stiffly along, Casanova ignored the battle pieces, the glittering patterns of weapons and armour, the collection of ivories and Eastern ceramics, and once inside the library never glanced at the books.

What interested him was to know if his fire was still alight—those damned lackeys again! Throwing down cocked hat and pelisse, Casanova flopped awkwardly to his knees and pumped the bellows into the white wood ash. The logs smouldered and burst into flame, making a little red

glow of comfort in the harsh world. Casanova scrambled stiffly for his embroidered arm-chair, and sat a while holding to the blaze, the pathetically trembling old hands with their shrunken fingers yellowed with cold.

Warmth flowed into him. The trembling old hands trembled less, the frozen old legs thawed, the dark beaked face with its network of wrinkles and toothless Voltairean grin relaxed. Casanova looked round him, noting now with the book-lover's endless passion, the long rows of noble books. Pretty snug, pretty snug! Not so snug, alas, as a neat little *casino* in Venice and a brazier of glowing charcoal and a pretty charmer ready for a luxurious bed. Casanova sighed, thinking of that *casino* where he had entertained his eminence and excellency Cardinal Bernis and his delicious mistress, and how the envoy of His Britannic Majesty had jockeyed Casanova out of possession of the ravishing C.C.

Casanova sighed again, leaned back and shut his eyes. Body of Bacchus, what an infernal affliction age is! And nothing to be done about it, not a thing. Behind his closed lids his mental sight called up the old Marquise d'Urfé, so credulous of all the tales of "Rosicrucian rebirth" rattled out to her by a handsome Venetian adventurer who had so agreeably included carnal conversation among the means of regaining youth. And thinking of the superstitious Marquise and the money he got out of her and how he made her strip naked to enter the "magic bath", the withered old rascal grinned and opened his eyes.

He sighed again, thinking of the lost girls and the spent ducats and the eaten meals. Just now he was regretting the ducats more than all the rest put together. Who were those moral fools who said money didn't make you happy? Perhaps not, but a more certain proposition is that nobody can or ever could be happy without it. And Casanova thought of all the ways he had made money in the past . . . In the past! Time was when the Chevalier de Seingalt had hundreds in his pockets and thousands in the bank. Time was when the most innocent girls and the loveliest women lost heart and head and reputation for the sake of a certain cavalier of

Venice. And now even the peasant girls never turned to look after the Don Juan of the age, and the light ladies, after glancing at him, giggled and whispered satirically behind their fans. It wasn't that way in the past.

The past. Casanova grinned savagely, remembering how he, who had gathered rosebuds with the best of them, was reduced to living in the past and to the task of writing it all down truthfully for the amusement of his patron. All? Truthfully? He grinned again as he played hide-and-seek with what was left of a conscience now purely literary. Well, perhaps memory did fail sometimes; and perhaps he had put down the flattering what-might-have-happened instead of the colourless what-did-happen, and perhaps he had been a little free with the reputations of dear, dead women. *Sacrebleu!* Why not? What a Boeotian waste life would be without love, and for every real love affair some charmer must lose her virtue—and a good thing too!

But living in the past is a devilish insipid pastime for a gentleman—and Casanova's face in the firelight looked haggard as he regretted the ducats he had squandered and forgot, the fair women he had lost. Ah, if a man, even an old man, has money . . .

And he lost himself in a dream of vain wishes, imagining himself out on the wide roads of Europe with a heavy purse and his own travelling chariot, calling for the fastest post horses, dropping gold in the hands of landlords and postilions, waiters and wenches, kissing every chambermaid and enjoying every league of the road, the road to Paris . . . Paris? Alas, dear demented Paris, once the city where all was pleasure and where all that hindered pleasure was tossed aside as "prejudice", Paris had murdered the good Louis and every gentleman who hadn't had the sense to make himself scarce, and had prostituted herself to those abominable *sans-culottes* . . .

If not Paris, then Naples, amiable, bigoted, lovely Naples that "dwells on the confines of hell-fire and paradise"—and he nodded and drowsed and smiled to himself, thinking of happily wicked Naples which so easily came to terms with

"prejudice" and had smiled so flatteringly on young Giacomo. . . .

"With all that must burden his conscience he smiles in his sleep like a child!" said a loud sarcastic voice.

Casanova bounced up wide awake in his chair, and with stupefaction saw a middle-aged man seated on the opposite side of the hearth with his chin resting on his folded hands, and his hands supported by the knob of his cane. A quite ludicrous expression of incredulity came into Casanova's eyes as he stared at the man's handsome, intelligent face with its mocking smile; and this in turn switched to a look of almost panic horror as he recognized his visitor. His mouth sagged a little, his eyes widened, and the cropped hair under his wig bristled with horror. He wanted desperately to run away, escape anywhere, but was too old and too frightened. At last:

"Saint-Germain—the Count of—Saint-Germain!" he stuttered, clutching the arms of his chair.

"Ah!" The queer visitor stirred from his immobile pose, and as he moved a diamond on his finger flashed in the waning firelight. "Ah, my dear Casanova, I thought that given time you might recognize—shall we be polite and say—a friend?"

Casanova licked his withered lips with a tongue gone dry from fright, and his voice, when he managed to produce it, croaked like an old frog's.

"But you're dead! Fifteen years ago—in Schleswig—you died—they buried you."

The visitor looked intensely amused and chuckled to himself.

"Yet you see me here," he said, his bright old eyes gleaming with malice, "how do you account for that?"

"I don't. Unless you're a ghost."

The Count gravely held out a gold snuff-box set with diamonds and made illustrious by a miniature portrait of His Most Christian Majesty, Louis the Fifteenth and the well-beloved of France.

"You remember that box?"

Casanova nodded, and the Count went on a little sneeringly:

"Perhaps you think that's a ghost? Take a pinch of snuff."

With shaking fingers, Casanova awkwardly dipped into the box, but spilled more grains of snuff on his lace jabot than he carried to his nostrils. He sneezed.

"Ah," said the Count, "I see your nose doesn't take my snuff for a ghost of itself."

Casanova let the sneer pass. The sneeze seemed to clear his head, and he pulled himself together with the speed and skill acquired by a lifetime of getting into scrapes and getting out of them by quickness of wit.

"How the devil did you get in here? And without my hearing you?" Seeing the Count merely smiled at that with an irritating smirk of complacency, Casanova added: "That 'dying' was just another of your tricks, I suppose?"

Evidently Casanova knew where to hit an old antagonist, for the Count looked annoyed at this insinuation and put on an air of uncommon stateliness.

"Sir!" he exclaimed in a voice made shrill by wrath. "Do not judge others by yourself, above all the Count of Saint Germain! You betrayed and sold the little you surreptitiously learned of the Secrets of the Rosy Cross to cheat the poor old Marquise d'Urfé, and shamefully abused Senator Bragadin of Venice with your pretended knowledge of Solomon's Key and your imaginary familiar, Paralis! But know, vile worldling, that the True Knowledge of the Rosy Cross, applied with virtue and awe, has procured me the gift of eternal youth!"

Casanova listened smilingly to this diatribe and recovered himself so thoroughly as to be able to simulate a yawn which he pretended politely to smother.

"So I've heard you say before, Count," he said sneeringly. "Others pretend you're the Wandering Jew. Some say you found a bottle of Ponce de León's water. Some that you're the Devil. Still others are rude enough to call you charlatan."

"You don't believe in me!" exclaimed the Count, his eyes

sparkling with anger and wounded conceit. "Look at me! Look at me, I say," he went on, trying to impose on Casanova by an assumption of venerable authority. "Do I look older than when you knew me in Paris and London?"

"No," said Casanova frankly, unable to quell a tremor of goose-flesh and a cold creeping at his spine. "No, I can't say you do. I'll be honest with you—by God! You look even younger."

"And that was forty years ago!" said the Count triumphantly, recovering his good humour. "While you, Monsieur de Casanova, you who were then in the very summer of your days, sit here wrinkled and decrepit!"

"Sir," said Casanova, with an impertinent tilt to his old nose, "when you did us the honour of 'dying' in Schleswig and resurrecting yourself by the mysteries of the Rosy Cross, I fear you omitted to resurrect the politeness of Versailles you once wore as an ornament."

"Sir," said the Count tranquilly, "you are a great rascal."

"Sir," said Casanova, lifting his haunches half an inch from the chair in a courteous bow, "in this I yield precedence to you. I have known many charlatans and mystifiers, but you are certainly the first."

It looked as if this queer meeting of two rival adventurers would evaporate in an old men's quarrel, but the Count made no reply to Casanova's last remark (which certainly lacked the grace and urbanity of Versailles) and sat looking quietly into the fire. Casanova went off in a reverie of his own. In spite of his cool front, he was not a little impressed by this sudden mysterious arrival, and quite at a loss to account for the fact that years seemed to have made no impression on this old personage, who was said by some (as Casanova had just reminded him) to be the Wandering Jew and by others to be the illegitimate child of a Queen of Spain. . . .

Like most charlatans, Casanova had a touch of the superstition he exploited in others. It was that half-belief in the supernatural which made him so successful with the dupes who flourished so oddly through the Age of Reason, just as his half-belief that he meant to marry the girl made him so

eloquent an amorist. And every egotist in his old age inclines to the sober faith that the mighty Universe was constructed chiefly as a stage for his immortality.

Looking up, Casanova found the sharp cold eyes of the impassive cynic watching his face. A flash of insane hope went through him. Could it be—must it not be that the Powers of the Rosy Cross had sent their prophet to share his immortality with the invaluable Seingalt! Perhaps—who knows—the Count meant to enrol him among the “Philalethes”, that select group of immortals said to include Cagliostro, Condorcet and the Prince of Hesse.

A cynical chuckle from the Count somewhat damaged this fantastic hope.

“And so, Monsieur de Casanova,” he said so abruptly that Casanova flinched, “so you speak ill of me in that message of yours to Posterity—which, between ourselves, I don’t think will reach its address.”

“I don’t understand you.”

“Is it possible?” The Count’s voice was urbane enough but had in it the tremor of wounded vanity. “Surely you haven’t forgotten that priapic romance about yourself on which you’ve wasted so much imagination for so long?”

Casanova flushed angrily—he was offended, not by the Count’s contempt for his morals and truth-telling, but by the implication that his great work was unimportant. But for the moment his artist’s resentment of criticism was lost in wonder.

“How can you know anything of that?” he cried wonderingly. “Nobody has seen it except Count Waldstein and . . .”

“You think that difficult for me?” interrupted the Count haughtily. “For me who surprised the secrets of Porphyry and Iamblicus—for me who knew Apollonius of Tyana and Christian Rosenkreutz—for me, the inspirer of Emanuel Swedenborg!”

Here Casanova ought to have laughed, for this pompous running over of high-sounding names was exactly the sort of thing Casanova had done hundreds of times to impress some wealthy fool. But he didn’t laugh. That streak of super-

stition kept him in awe, and he merely muttered something sulkily to the effect that his book paid tribute to the Count's learning and conversation. . . .

"Not to mention my powers of seduction, eh sir?" the Count put in, smiling at this tribute to his masculine vanity. "Apropos—are we to take seriously those stories of your own flutterings of petticoats, or are they among those flights of fancy you launched for our amusement?"

Anyone who knew him would have wagered that such a slur on his unscrupulous virility would have pricked the Don Juan of his time into angry vindication of his bad reputation; but Casanova was not himself tonight, shaken by the cold and the loneliness and the threat of ever approaching death and the mysterious apparition of a man he still more than half believed must be dead. Casanova was in the grip of one of the oldest and most futile of human passions—the lust to go on living, living for ever, after Nature had warned the bond of life was cancelled. If his ancient rival brought Life . . .

"I've always wanted to ask you, Count, what you and the King said and did in that secret laboratory he had built for you?" Casanova's voice was almost humble, but there was cunning in it, for Casanova believed the place had been contrived for who knows what dabblings in necromancy, Rosicrucianism and the elixir of long life; though in plain historical fact it was merely to give Louis some lessons in chemistry. So willing are men—especially those who have lived by duping others—to dupe themselves when they want something impossible badly enough, that Casanova never reflected that if the Count had really known the secret of immortality he would have sold it first to the King of France.

Casanova's hopes of leading quickly up to the topic of immortality were quickly smashed. Those magic syllables "The King" opened the floodgates of the old courtier's memory, and he grew garrulous about the glories of Versailles, of Madame de Pompadour and the Marshal-Duke of Richelieu, of Voltaire and the dancer Camargo and . . .

"Apropos Madame la Duchesse de Chartres," the Count interrupted himself in a charming piece of Court scandal, "you knew, of course, she was an adept?"

"Of course."

"Unfortunately," the Count went on with extreme gravity, "the disorder of her life made worthless all her knowledge. The impure, even when initiated, cannot control the Spirits."

"Why, sir," Casanova broke in, "how can that be, seeing that both you and I . . ."

Casanova regretted the impertinence even as it passed his lips—like other men the Count had his illogicalities, and while in one mood he would smile and scarcely deny insinuations of his successes with women, in another mood he would furiously resent any hint that he was not the most spiritual of "adepts". Above all, he would be angered by hearing himself linked with one he considered a degraded traitor to the Higher Mysticism.

Instead of the outburst Casanova expected—cursing his own carelessness in provoking it—the Count merely smiled and waved deprecatingly a slim white hand half hidden in elegant lace.

"He wants something from me!" Casanova instantly said to himself. "Come, that's better."

"She had a wonderful collection of occult books . . ." the Count added casually, looking dreamily at the glowing wood ashes.

In a flash Casanova saw the whole situation and knew why the Count of Saint-Germain had come to drop in on him so surprisingly; but though a glint showed momentarily in his eyes, the old gambler's face expressed nothing.

This was what lay hidden behind the Count's seemingly careless words. Casanova also had known the dissipated Duchess, had "borrowed" books from her expensively collected library, books which he had "forgotten" to restore, for among "adepts" their monetary value was very high. Long ago of course they had been sold to bearded German and haggard French searchers for the philosopher's stone, the elixir and all the other fantasies; and of course the Count

knew this. But on lonely evenings of the past winter Casanova had tried to conjure away some of his boredom by forging from his own imagination a work which was so rare only two copies were said to exist; and when the work was completed Casanova had showed it to his patron, Count Waldstein, as an original. . . .

"Let me be frank with you," said the Count of Saint Germain urbanely, but with a look of intense duplicity. "I understand some of these books came into your possession—honourably, of course, honourably."

"And if they did?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing, a mere matter of idle curiosity," said the Count too hastily.

"Nothing comes of nothing, my dear Count," Casanova sneered a trifle. "Not even idle curiosity."

"Well, Chevalier," said the Count, seeing his mistake, "let me admit the curiosity is more than idle. I should like to see those books . . . Could you be tempted to lend them? To a respectable person, of course, another initiate?"

Casanova shook his head slowly and gravely, as if some tremendous responsibility were on him.

The Count saw his mistake.

"Or," he added meaningly, "you might part with them—for a consideration . . . ?"

"Always supposing the consideration adequate . . ."

Casanova began.

"And also supposing you still have the books," the Count interjected, scrutinizing him sharply.

Casanova rose slowly—old-man slowly—from his chair, with a countenance of formidable gravity and importance, although inside him was a little laughing devil almost choking him with suppressed chuckles. In solemn silence and with a great show of mystery he opened a secret drawer in his rosewood desk, and brought out a box of sham ivory carved with the pentacle and the signs of the zodiac. From this he extracted with a great show of reverent awe a small, dirty, tattered-looking manuscript. After kissing it, with apparent respect but actually in much the same spirit that a

gambler kisses dice, Casanova placed it gently in the Count's hands.

"Orellanus!" Written words can give no imitation of the peculiar tone in which Saint-Germain spoke the name of this forgotten author—there was awe in it and almost unconsciously the gush and pose of the practised charlatan and cupidity and the eager curiosity of the bibliophile . . .

"Orellanus Petreius! The lost book on the Egyptian mysteries! The key to the message of the Pyramids and the Hieroglyphs! How in the world did you come by this treasure?"

Casanova smiled. Luckily for him the flicker of the firelight was too uncertain for the Count to read either the expression on Casanova's face or the manuscript in his hands. A full view of either in clear light would have roused the Count's suspicions at once. As for Casanova, he was on thorns of half a dozen different kinds. Was the Count's surprise genuine? Perhaps Waldstein had only mentioned an occult book of great rarity, and not the title. How badly did Saint-Germain want it? What would and could he give for it? But at all costs he must be prevented from examining the manuscript, as he was already doing, bending down to the hot firelight, and peering eagerly at Casanova's imagined hieroglyphs. . . .

He leaned swiftly forward, and before Saint-Germain even knew what he was about, Casanova had taken the manuscript from his hands and returned it to its sham ivory box.

"Why do you do that?" exclaimed the Count, angrily.

For a moment Casanova had his back turned, under pretence of hiding the box back in its drawer—actually to wipe the sweat from his face and the too cunning smile from his lips.

"My dear Count," he said suavely, sitting down again. "You must forgive me—but—on your own showing you are extremely old—you might have dropped that priceless book you were holding too near the fire."

"What nonsense is this, sir?" Saint-Germain's eyes were

bright with anger and disappointment. "Return me the book at once. I insist . . ."

"You forget," there was a trace of insolence in Casanova's voice. "The book is not yours, but mine."

"You are unworthy of it," the Count retorted angrily. "To you its secrets will not be revealed. . . ."

"That is as may be," said Casanova coolly.

"You . . . !" The Count was on the very verge of some furious insult but managed to check himself. True, it was lamentable that a gentleman like Count de Saint-Germain should be thwarted by this card-sharper, this Italian adventurer, this petticoat-lifter, this King's pimp, this profaner of sacred mysteries . . . true, true, but best kept *in petto*—in the secret bosom—if the book is to be obtained.

"You . . ." the Count repeated in a very different tone, "mistake me, my dear Chevalier. I meant only to imply that certain knowledge, certain initiations . . . But never mind that. The important thing is that you have this priceless Orellanus. Nevertheless, I feel hurt that you refuse to share with an old and devoted friend."

"I am ready to sell it—for a price," said Casanova simply.

The Count started as if he had been bitten by a fire-ant. He did not like this sudden coming to the point, it seemed ominous, it seemed to portend the asking of a stiff price for an object Casanova knew was worth it.

"My dear Count," Casanova continued deprecatingly, "you seem surprised and even hurt by my modest demand. Be reasonable. You want this book—I can see it, so don't deny it. And I know why you want it. The manuscript is certainly the only one of the book in the world. I have learned wonderful things from it, but what might it not lead to in your hands? Miracles, miracles. . . . !"

The Count grunted at this, but said nothing.

"Now," Casanova went on with that peculiar sweetness of voice which seems to come to all sellers of experience when they are trying to get a high price for something they know is worthless. "Now I am ready to give this great, this unique, this priceless work to you. . . ."

As Casanova paused, like the cat with its sharp-clawed foot held over the mouse shamming death, the Count looked up quickly, trying to read his features in the fading glow of the fire.

“. . . for a consideration,” Casanova said at last with a smile, condescending to end the suspense.

The Count's eyes went dull, and he slumped a little in his chair, waiting to hear the price.

“What do I ask?” Casanova continued rhetorically, his Italian imagination kindling at the thought of so excellent a part to feign. “Money? Power? Knowledge? Women? Excellent gifts, delicious pleasures! But what do they mean to a poor old man like me? What could I buy with money, of what use would power be to me? I have too much of the only knowledge (except the occult) worth having, the bitter knowledge of life. And the loveliest and most wanton of women might wound my heart but could no longer stir my flesh. Such gifts, and all that you can think of as the *summa bona*, are wasted without that one gift which, if you speak truth, you and you only of the seed of man and the flesh of woman can bestow . . .” He paused, and the effect of his pause was heightened by the sudden extinction of the last flame in the fireplace giving place to a mere dull red glow of hot ashes. “Life! Eternal life, of which you say you have the secret. Not the silly cheating abstract life of the *fanatiques* who simply use it to separate fools and their money—but real life, here and now, life with the sparkle of youth and warmth of love in the veins! Give me that—fifty years of youthful life, ten even, and Orellanus is yours.”

Casanova played his little rhetorical fugue with such zest and appeal that, like a good actor, he shed real tears over his imaginary pathos.

To his great chagrin and astonishment, however, the Count seemed virtually unmoved by an oration which Casanova considered a little masterpiece of humbug, and, instead of making an impulsive reply, merely took a pinch of snuff, coughed, sneezed, and remarked dryly that the fire seemed to need mending. Cursing the old fiend's hard heart

and powers of bargaining, Casanova heaved his stiff old bones from the arm-chair, and threw a couple of logs and some twigs on the dying ashes which almost immediately broke into cheerful flames.

"My dear Giacomo," said the Count urbanely, as Casanova dropped back heavily in his chair, breathless from even so slight an exertion, "I may call you 'Giacomo', may I not? What could be more natural, more reasonable, more inevitable than such a request, in such circumstances . . ." And at that the Count gave such an all-over searching sort of glance at him that Casanova felt revealed in all his naked decrepitude. "As you must know, it is a request that has been made to me innumerable times in the course of my long, my very long life. And, as always, with the most poignant regret, I am forced to make the same answer—impossible."

"Impossible!" cried Casanova in dismay, "but why?"

"Because," said the Count, politely but with a glint of unspeakably sardonic mirth in his eye, "the Highest of the Spirits long ago impressed upon me that if ever I revealed the secret of my immortality to any mortal, by that very act I should cancel its power and doom myself to instant death."

Casanova hid his disappointment behind a pinch of snuff and a lace handkerchief. The old fox! Of course he must long ago have worked out the exact form to discourage all enquiries and importunities.

"Don't let that rebuff you," the Count added with unkind irony. "You have touched the fringe of the occult sciences, with a profane hand, it is true, but who knows what you might attain in time?" He coughed disagreeably, and Casanova hated him. "Meanwhile—ugh, ugh!—excuse me—meanwhile, as I can put Orellanus to uses of the highest importance for the good of mankind as well as of the elect, why not sell it to me for a price I can pay? Why should you always be chained down here as librarian to this Teuton? With a round purse of money, you could be out on the roads and on the way south—to Naples."

Casanova was startled—the random shot hit so exactly his

own reverie of half an hour before. To be out on the roads, bound for happy sinful Naples—that was what he had been wishing. And with all his superstitious belief rekindled he gazed in awe at the mysterious Count. Nevertheless no amount of superstitious awe could quell his instinct for bargaining. . . .

“How much?” he asked.

“A thousand gold louis.”

“Five thousand.”

“Nonsense, man!” The Count was evidently annoyed, “I’ll give you twelve hundred . . .”

“Five thousand . . .”

The bargaining was intense and interminable, for the Count of Saint-Germain had millennia of life before him and Casanova was obstinate. Finally they compromised for the Count’s jewelled snuff-box and seventeen hundred and fifty-five louis—the odd five showing eloquently how fierce the battle had been.

“And now,” said the Count, sagging a little from the fight and cheering up with a pinch of snuff, “let me have the Orellanus and I will give you my note of hand for the money—you can collect it from my bank tomorrow.”

This perfectly simple and natural suggestion left Casanova completely baffled and dismayed. The whole situation was so characteristic of the man and his appetite for life, immediate life, never mind what the rules are and what the consequences. He wanted to get away from hateful Dax, and have one more fling; and, to do that, he was not only prepared to make a fraudulent sale, but to risk the strong possibility that this would so alienate Count Waldstein that Casanova would lose the only friend and shelter of his penniless age. The forgery was bound to be discovered by the Count of Saint-Germain within an hour at most; and of course he would go direct to Count Waldstein with a loud story of the cheat. That was not what troubled Casanova—it was two steps away. The real task was to have the money and be out on the road before the Count had time to discover the fraud. . . .

“My dear Count,” said Casanova coolly, “you have the

gift of eternal youth, and forget that my seconds are numbered. Send for the cash now. . . .”

“But there is no banker here,” the Count objected.

“Send my servant to the town—or yours—or both—I’ll pay for it. . . .”

“But the banker—he’ll be asleep!”

“My dear fellow!” There was infinite contempt in Casanova’s voice, “what on earth are burgesses for except to be waked up to attend on gentlemen? Come, humour my whim, one of the last, perhaps, of your old friend and enemy! I have wine—let us make a night of it—we’ll part at dawn, when the money comes, you with the knowledge, I once more in search of the unknown, the adventure, and—ah! to see Italy once more before I die!”

The Count shrugged, demurred, hesitated, listened to more persuasive eloquence than ever flowed from one of Goldoni’s harlequins, and at last yielded. The order on the bank was written, the Count’s servant sent off with it, Casanova’s servant ordered to pack in the utmost secrecy and to have horses and a travelling carriage in readiness to start at any minute. . . .

“Your health, Count!” said Casanova happily, lifting a glass of champagne which glistened in the light of half a dozen tall candles. “To my Liberator!” And he put the glass down empty.

“Thank you, thank you.” The Count sipped his wine with restraint, but not without appreciation. Then he shook his head as one who has sore misgivings. “Perhaps I have done wrong,” he mused. “What will your patron say, Giacomo?”

“‘And a fig for the . . .’” Casanova hummed gaily, “I beg your pardon. What were you saying?”

“Nothing. I was only thinking how the price of wisdom will be spent on the deeds of folly—the arcana of the Subtlest Spirits squandered upon women. . . .”

“Too late,” said Casanova, dashed suddenly from his merriment of rejoicing.

The Count looked at him enquiringly, lifted his brows, assumed an air of compunction.

"Ah," he said, and took a pinch of snuff, and then another. "Ah. Some advise mandrake roots, some potions of brains and marrow, civet and candles, the hair of a wolf's tail, a swallow's heart, the virile member of a whale, pistachio nuts, ginger, the white of eggs . . ." The Count paused, having come temporarily to the end of his breath and erudition.

"Alas," said Casanova naïvely, "you forget youth and the woman one wants."

The Count laughed.

"You take a different view in your book," he said. "Don't you recommend diets?"

"In the devil's name," said Casanova, "why did Waldstein show you that manuscript of mine. . . ?"

"Genius cannot be kept secret," said the Count ironically. "I foresee that in a century I shall be sought after for my recollections of you."

"That won't console me for being dead."

"Let the thought of future fame console you now," said the Count amiably. "Men have been willing to die for it."

"More fools they," retorted Casanova gloomily. "A year of youth is worth an eternity of fame."

"Let us not discuss that," said the Count with the implication that to an immortal the topic was without interest. "But there is one subject I should like to ask you about."

"And what is that?" asked Casanova, stealing a glance at the clock, and taking up his glass.

"Women."

"Ah." Casanova put down his glass of wine untasted.

"Ah?" inquired the Count mockingly. "When I first knew you, Monsieur Casanova, you were never at a loss upon so engaging a subject. And what you say in your book confirms your reputation as a charmer."

"You are kind enough to say so," Casanova muttered indifferently.

"Still . . ." The Count took a couple of quick sniffs at a pinch of snuff in a way which seemed to imply some scepticism. "Forgive me if I am indiscreet—but—haven't you embroidered the truth?"

"There was no need," said Casanova demurely with a flash of the old impudence in his eyes.

"And yet," the Count seemed to be reflecting aloud, "yet in spite of all these adventures with so many different women in so many different countries, in spite of this dexterity in sliding in and out of so many female beds—because of it, perhaps—why were you never in love?"

"What!" exclaimed Casanova, roused at last to real interest. "Why, my whole youth and manhood were consumed with passion. . . ."

"No doubt, no doubt, but that is not quite the same thing," said the Count coolly interrupting him. "And then, your women—were they of a high type? They had charm, sexual curiosity, sensuality—but had they affection, devotion?"

"You haven't known me or read my book to much purpose . . ." Casanova began indignantly, but the Count talked him down. . . .

". . . You always managed to part with them easily enough—but did you ever notice and brood over the fact that they had no difficulty in giving you up?"

Casanova shifted a little in his chair, and looked about him uncomfortably. It was clear that the idea had never come to him before. The Count saw the impression he had made, and pursued his advantage with all the malice of long friendship.

"Do you know, Giacomo, for all your successes of the flesh—and they, I admit, were startling and numerous—I also believe . . ." and here he paused to rub in what he was going to say . . . "I believe that no woman was ever in love with you. . . ."

"What!" Casanova's eyes protruded with fury.

"Yes," the Count purred on viciously, "I don't believe any woman was in love with you. I don't believe you knew how to merit so desirable a crown to your flame. Oh, you had a flair for women, you liked them with genuine gusto, all that was feminine came to you like a breath of perfume of which you never wearied—so long as the perfume changed. You were sensitive to women's charm, you liked their wit, their

gaiety, their freedom from that stupid coarseness which makes common men so abominable, you were enraptured by the shining of their hair, the soft kisses of their lips, the infinite suavity of the touch of their naked arms and bosoms and thighs, yet you never really knew that a woman has a heart and a brain. . . .”

“What damned nonsense is this?”

With a creaking of stiff old joints Casanova heaved his great body out of his chair, and lurched up and down the room clenching his fists and swearing to himself in Venetian dialect, while the Count watched him in a mood between delighted malice and physical apprehension.

“How can you doubt that I was beloved?” he spluttered angrily. “Did they not do all I asked? Did they not crown my flame with woman’s ultimate sacrifice?”

“Doubtless!” The Count took his quick double-sniff of snuff which somehow reminded Casanova of Monsieur de Voltaire—it had just his touch of sardonic disbelief. “Doubtless, if you believe with the dull world that man is the pursuer, his the will to sex, he the triumpher over obstacles, virtues, duties, repulses . . . But, my dear Monsieur de Casanova, have you never noticed how the written word betrays the truth?”

“I don’t understand you.”

“Well,” the Count smiled benevolently, “I will tell you. That book of yours contains a startling fact, all the more so since you certainly never noticed it.”

“And what was the fact about myself I never noticed?” Casanova’s voice had a little of the bleat of angry old age in it, despite his efforts to keep cool and appear sarcastic.

“Why simply this—so far from your having made use of all these women, they, my dear sir, made use of you!”

Casanova had stopped in his heavy swing up and down the library to listen to the Count’s last words. Now he started off again, his big body lumbering heavily as he struggled with his resentment and dismay. For Don Juan, above all an Italian Don Juan, to be told that he had been the dupe of his women and not they his, was intolerable. He resented it

hotly, wanted to throw the charge back at the Count as an absurd paradox, envy's twisting of the facts. He tried to reassure himself, remembering women who had risked pain and disgrace and imprisonment, even death, for him. For him? No, for their pleasure in him, for that perverse joy which men take in ruining themselves for the fashionable light woman whose body can be bought, but not the caprice of the heart which throws her into the arms of some penniless gigolo! Body of Bacchus! They had made a male harlot of him and made him pay for it into the bargain. And it came across him, literally for the first time, that woman with all her disabilities, the disapprobation of the Church and the Laws, her weakness and undeveloped mind, was perhaps not so helpless as she seemed. . . .

He turned from his restless cage-walk, which wearied without calming him, and dropped clumsily in the heavy arm-chair opposite the unsmiling Count who sat silently watching him.

"Sir," said Casanova, trying to recapture the old swagger, but not very successfully, "you have said things tonight which in my young days I should have resented hotly. But I am old enough—alas!—to see the folly of putting the point of honour where it doesn't belong. . . ."

"Wisdom lingers," said the Count smiling, "but tracks us all down at last."

"Usually too late," Casanova replied. "But you must not think you have convinced me. . . ."

The Count smiled faintly, but even with old eyes by candle-light Casanova was quick enough to notice it.

"You smile!" He said sharply. "But I mean what I say. Nor do I accept your absurd theory that I have unintentionally written things I meant to conceal. No writer would believe such stuff. But I will admit to you—yes, confess, if you like—not everything in my life happened as I have written it, nor has everything been put down. But if I could have written the whole truth, even you would admit that at least once I was in love and was loved for my own sake. The true story of that I was forced to conceal."

"And what," asked the Count politely but with a touch of weariness in his manner, "could have prevented the Chevalier de Seingalt from setting down the truth about a love affair in a manuscript intended only for his private friends and for posterity?"

"A good question!" Casanova retorted warmly. "But, sir, it is not only a love story. Affairs of State are involved. . . ."

The Count raised his eyebrows.

"Affairs of State are always revealed in time, and you yourself . . ."

"In this case I am sworn to silence under penalties. . . ."

The Count shrugged his shoulders slightly, but kept discreetly silent.

"You mean to imply that I have sworn oaths without keeping them?" said Casanova, smiling involuntarily. "I admit it. But this oath I can and must keep. I regret it. I should have liked to tell you at least the true story of . . . but I must not tell you which of my women it is."

"What have you to fear? What foreign government can touch you under Waldstein's protection? Unless," with a sneer, "you are important enough for them to go to war about?"

"You are not a Venetian," said Casanova, with a slight tremor. "And you cannot understand. You are deceived by the name of Republic into thinking that Venice is freer than the monarchies. True, Venetians have no king, and no Venetian may bear a foreign title unless he is so insignificant that it is contemptuously flung at him. But the government in spite of its supposed popular basis, is in fact the tyranny of a rich, powerful and closed minority, disciplined from within, and acting through the most treacherous and unscrupulous secret police armed with almost unlimited power. I, I who speak to you, have known the inside of the *Piombi*, the Venetian State prison, controlled by the tyranny of the Three; and I know of what I speak. It is unwise of me even to drop these hints to you. But you do not know the implacable vengeance of the Three—you do not know the power of their police to track down and murder a condemned

Venetian. They don't often use it, because they are not strong enough to defy any of the greater powers, but in this case they might. There are secrets behind all this that I can guess at, others I never even knew. . . . I am an old man, Count, but I don't care to die at the hands of an assassin at the order of the Three."

The Count listened to this long harangue, first with sceptical indifference, then with a slight look of bewilderment, then with amazement.

"Can it be possible that you haven't heard?"

"Heard what?"

"Don't you see the gazettes?"

"Sometimes," Casanova made a grimace, "but as little as possible. What have they to tell us except the unmerited triumph of the *sans-culottes* and the *canaille*?"

"Well, I should have thought you would have been the first person here to know it. How could they refrain from telling you? These Bohemians are dull fellows. . . ."

"But," interrupted Casanova, "what is this news that I should know. Is Citizen Bonaparte dead?"

"No, my friend," said the Count with a cynical smile, "*General* Bonaparte's troops have captured Venice."

"What! I don't believe it!"

"It is none the less true that the Serene Republic of Venice has ceased to exist. Bonaparte was asked for his orders, and casually remarked: 'That Republic has lived long enough.' So those high-principled Republicans, his lackeys, immediately abolished the oldest Republic in the world and are now busy plundering the corpse. No doubt, as Voltaire might have said, to encourage the other Republics. But here is the gazette—read what it says."

Casanova took the newspaper mechanically, brushed his hand once or twice across his face, and stared at the print without seeming to see it in spite of the strong spectacles he had put on. With incredulous surprise the Count noticed that the old man's eyes were blinded with tears, and his lips were mumbling something. A prayer? No. "Paolo Anafesta, 697; Marcello Tegliano, 717; Orso Ipato, 726; Mastro

Miles 737; Orso Diodato, 742 . . .” It was the thousand-years roll of the Doges of Venice with their dates, which every Venetian child learned at school. . . .

Casanova’s mumble of dead names died away, and there was a long silence. Then a log suddenly broke apart with a shower of sparks and a sudden spurt of flame. Casanova got up to return part of the log which had rolled forward on the hearth too close to the wooden floor, then he turned his back on the Count, walked to the opposite end of the library where he fumbled with the lid of a rough chest hidden in a corner. When he returned, his spectacles had vanished, he was smiling as if nothing had happened, and carried a fresh bottle of champagne in his hand.

“Forgive my ill manners,” he said, starting to open the bottle, “your news startled me.”

“It is I who should ask forgiveness for bearing such news. But I thought you were too much of a cosmopolitan . . .”

“Even a cosmopolitan may have vain regrets,” Casanova interrupted, as the champagne cork popped. “The story of Venice will not soon be forgotten, though it started with heroes and ended with such as I.”

“At all events,” said the Count, taking the glass from Casanova’s hand, “. . . Yes, I will have some of that excellent ham. . . . At all events, you have now nothing more to fear from the vengeance of the Three.”

“I wish I had,” said Casanova ruefully. “It is not pleasant to pick up a piece of dirty paper and learn that one’s country is no more. But let us drink to the damnation of the *canaille!*”

“With all my heart.”

“And as I am keeping you up when you would doubtless rather be in bed,” Casanova added, carving slices of ham with great dexterity, “and as I have now nothing to fear from the Ten or Three or any Venetian *sbirre*, let me tell you the story I had to garble in my manuscript. . . .”

“The love story?”

“Yes, the true story of Henriette.”

PART I

"Quella zente che gà in bocca 'l riso."
"The nation that has laughter in its mouth.")
Venetian Popular Song.

I

VENICE lay hidden in a triple darkness of night, cloud and icy rain-squalls driven by the *bora*, that dreaded north-east wind that swoops in on the city from the Adriatic bringing the tumult of mountain storms into its tranquil waterways lined with palaces. In the pauses of the drumming wind wakeful citizens heard a more ominous sound—the thunder of breakers on the Lido sea walls. Thinking of those sole defences wakeful ones swore a prayer or two, hoping they would hold; for, with *bora* blowing, a single breach would topple Venice under a foaming desert of white-capped waves.

Yet there was one Venetian who snored peacefully through the noise and danger of the storm, though his bed was none too soft. Inside the *felze* (the little arched cabin) of a moored gondola, a young man lay huddled in sleep, indifferent to the thump of the prow against the mooring post, the slapping of sharp little canal waves, and the heavy patter of rain. If one of the innumerable police spies (whose business was to commit any meanness to keep the government in power but never to interfere with the pleasures of citizens)—if one of these ubiquitous parasites had been so foolish as to be on the prowl on such a night and unwise enough to stick his head over a moored gondola (Venetian lovers were handy with the dagger if disturbed), well, he would simply have guessed that a gondolier had chosen to sleep on board rather than risk a certain drenching and possible drowning by rowing home. What the spy would not have seen in the dark was that this was an opulent sort of gondolier, since he wore silk breeches and diamond buckles in handsome shoes. Moreover he had dropped asleep wearing the *bauta*, that curious combination of white mask and black hood which the laws of Venice allowed all citizens to wear during carnival, so that

they might pursue their lawless pleasures in peace, provided they did not attempt to reform the State.

Bora whistled and howled; waves splashed and thumped; the gondola creaked as the rain drummed fiercely; and the masked man slept in perfect peace.

Suddenly there was a scurry and patter of naked feet; a hatless unshod figure rushed from a dark narrow lane on to the *fondamenta*, leaped into the rocking gondola, calling urgently but in a low voice:

"Marco! Marco! Where are you, man?"

No answer. The half-naked man cursed under his breath, hurriedly threw off the moorings, and began to row blindly against rain, wind and darkness towards the main artery of Venice, the Grand Canal. The gondola was under way, but only a few yards from shore, when there was another clatter of feet, shod this time, and another man tore out of the alley on to the *fondamenta*. The rower's white shirt and the creaking of his oar betrayed him through the stormy darkness.

"Casanova! Villain! Trickster! Liar! Seducer! Come back!"

There was no answer, and the rower used prodigies of strength to thrust the gondola through the storm towards open water and so escape.

"I see you, I hear you!" shouted the pursuer, dancing on the water brink in a frenzy of frustration. "Traitor, assassin, ravisher! Come back, I say!"

But the gondola—or rather the white shirt above the gondola which was all the pursuer could see—was now almost out of sight, and the shouter changed his tone to the shrill whine of a beggar:

"Ah, Giacomol! She loves you! We all love you! Only come back and marry her, and you are forgiven."

The wind tore away most of the words, and only "marry" and "forgive" reached Casanova's ears. Strained and breathless as he was with the effort to keep the heavy boat head to wind and force it along, he laughed derisively—Casanova and his fortune tied for ever to a wanton little slut in a back alley? Not likely!

But the laugh reached the pursuer's ears, and jabbed his frenzy to action.

"Spawn of Satan! Devil's dung! Impure bastard of an impurer mother! Take that! And that!"

A double-barrelled pistol crashed and flashed yellow in the dark, and a couple of bullets cracked past Casanova's head like the snap of metal whips. With a terrific heave Casanova somehow urged the gondola round the flank of a wall into a wider canal, where the wind caught its beam and drove it under a bridge. The pursuer's curses were suddenly blotted out; but the pistol shots had aroused the sleeper, who started up, yelping:

"Thieves! Murder! Help in the name of God and His Blessed Mother!"

"Shut up, Marco!" Casanova ordered him, "and row like hell for Ca' Bragadin."

Argument was out of the question in a gondola swept helplessly by the storm, and Marco clambered forward to take the other oar. These Venetians, even the gentlemen, could row a gondola as a Spaniard rides a horse, and knew their intricate network of canals as a village lad knows the lanes and footpaths round his home. Within half an hour they had the gondola safely moored outside the palace of Senator Bragadin, where Casanova often lived; but both were soaking wet from the rain. Marco could feel it trickling down his ankles into his shoes. Casanova dragged him under the lee of the great water door, where they could talk without shouting.

"I don't want your uncle Bragadin to see me," he whispered. "Only last week I had a preachment from him about fun is fun but do have a little sense. Let's slip in quietly, and change in my room."

But the great doors were locked and barred against the storm, and every lower window grated with heavy iron bars. There was nothing for it but to knock, and what with the knocking needed to wake the lackeys and the "Oh-ing" and "Ah-ing" of the lackeys over the plight of their young masterhips—out from his cosy *salone* pops Senator Bragadin

himself, a plump middle-aged man with sagging cheeks, pursy lips and kindly eyes under a heavy bagwig, a plump belly set off by an embroidered waistcoat with gold buttons, and stumpy legs ending in red-heeled shoes glinting with diamond buckles.

The Senator lifted plump white bejewelled hands in a gesture of despair which flung his exquisite lace ruffles back on the plum-coloured velvet of his sleeves:

"Giacomo! Marco! Boys!" He seemed to lament over them—in the manner of all parents and guardians who expect their juniors to be wiser and better than they are. "What is all this? How came you in this plight?"

"A wager," Casanova answered coolly, watching to see how angry the old man was. "Two of the gondoliers at the *traghetto* swore they could out-row us, and so we . . ."

"Out-row you!" The Senator dropped his arms and chuckled. "Have you seen yourselves? You look as if you'd matched yourselves to swim against a brace of water-rats . . ."

"It was an affair of honour with oars. Look at our hands!" And Casanova showed his palms blistered from the strenuous rowing.

"Poohl! An affair with girls, I warrant you," said the Senator airily, "I know you."

"Have we got to stand here confessing to sins when we're dying of cold and wet and hunger?" asked Casanova indignantly.

"I'm not so hungry," Marco put in. "But then I haven't worked as hard—and doubtless deliciously—as you have since dinner, Giacomo."

"Ho, ho," said the Senator, looking from one to the other meditatively. "So I guessed right, did I? Well, lads, indoors with you. Zorze, Zanze! Dry clothes for the *signorini*! Tognino, Felice! Food for the *signorini*! Cold fowl, cold tongue, sausage of Bologna, cold venison and a bottle of my best Soave! Scurry, you rascals! Off with you, lads!"

Pleasant to see the wholesome hunger of young men, the Senator mused as he watched them at table, noting however

that Giacomo ate twice as much as his friend, if he drank less. These amorists! Always temperate in their cups. Your true toper is seldom much of a lecher, except in bawdy songs, and winks to girls he doesn't want . . . Ariosto has something about that, I forget what. . . .

"Have you done, lads?" he said aloud, and as they nodded, pushing back from the table, the Senator continued to the servants: "Take away, Felice. Another flask of wine, Zorze. Then leave us."

"I'm sleepy," said Casanova, standing up to stretch himself, with a yawn he felt was over-acted, "I'm going to bed."

He turned to follow Felice, who was bowing himself out for the night, but the Senator called him back.

"One moment, Giacomo," said the Senator, as the servant closed the door. "Just tell me what really happened."

"I've already told you, Excellency," Casanova answered impudently.

The Senator shook his head.

"You'd better tell me," he said quietly. "You wouldn't have come home in that state if there hadn't been some sort of trouble. How often must I tell you that in this town everything—but *everything*—is known to the police? Tell me the exact truth, my son. I'll have your story before the Council of Ten—if need be, before the Three and Messer Grande himself. Who's going to believe your story of a bet, Giacomo? I never heard a more flimsy lie—and I've heard many and many a lie in my day, may the Blessed Virgin forgive them!"

"She's called Marietta," said Casanova, gravely, instantly dropping all pretence.

"Ah, ha!" said the Senator, nodding, pleased at his own little perspicuity. "Which Marietta? I know of two honoured by the amorous notice of your signory."

"Please, your Excellency," Marco put in, "this girl is a Neapolitan!"

"What?" exclaimed the Senator incredulously. "Another Marietta? And a Neapolitan? Body of Bacchus, is it possible? They talk dialect and breathe garlic."

"So please, your Excellency," said Casanova, "I have the best of evidence that she never touches garlic. And she has learned more Venetian from me than she has taught me Neapolitan. . . ."

"I don't doubt it, Master Aretino," retorted the Senator. "But, tell me, did you bring her here from Naples? Did you know her when you were there?"

"Never, so help me, did I set eyes on her, till I blundered into her and her friends on the Piazza, Saturday was a sen-night."

The Senator swore mildly in admiration.

"Pest! You go to work quickly, *abbate*," he said. "And then? Come, Giacomo, the truth. The Three are pitiless to a shuffler."

Casanova shrugged, feigning indifference, yet—so the Senator hoped rather than knew—told his tale with a slight grace of shame.

"It was easy enough," Casanova said. "From her first glance I saw that she—liked me. She had a mouth that begged silently for kisses and what breasts . . ."

"Enough!" cried the Senator. "Do you take us for bawds? Get on."

"Well, I scraped acquaintance with the uncle—found he played *faro* so badly I was obliged to cheat to lose a few ducats to him. The next thing was an invitation to the house. I kissed Marietta under the stairs, and heard from the uncle that he was in Venice for a lawsuit. . . ."

Marco interrupted with a burst of laughter.

"So that was why you plagued me until I introduce you to my old kinsman, the Judge?"

The Senator and Marco exchanged glances, and then involuntarily looked upwards as if to ask for higher guidance with this human problem.

"Well, gentlemen," Casanova continued, ignoring this by-play, "something was, I believe, said on the distasteful subject of marriage. Then I won back my ducats and—er—a few more. Tonight I was to enjoy the lady's favours while dear Marco here stood by in the gondola. Suddenly after

I had proved my devotion more than once, comes a furious clatter at the door. In bursts the uncle with a candle and a pistol . . .”

“So far, so good,” remarked the Senator, who had listened intently. “And what did you do?”

“Blew out the candle,” said Casanova impudently. “Escaped through a window, and made for the gondola, where I found the faithful Marco asleep in the *felze*. . . .”

“Why, damn it,” protested Marco, “did you expect me to be standing out in that rain. . . ?”

“And he didn’t wake,” continued Casanova, “until the old fool of an uncle had the impudence to fire a pistol. . . .”

The Senator, who had been chuckling very heartily, suddenly looked very grave.

“A pistol!” he exclaimed. “Pest! That can be heard even in a *bora*.”

“Besides,” said Casanova, “the fool might have shot me.”

“You!” said the Senator in stupefaction. “You’re not a gentleman, but Marco’s name is in the Golden Book. When Daniel Valieri dies, he’ll be Senator. . . .”

“But the man didn’t even know of his existence,” protested Casanova. “He was asleep in the *felze*, I tell you. . . .”

“No matter,” said the Senator in all seriousness, “he might have wounded or killed a future Senator. He—a foreigner, a plebeian! Pest! Giacomo, take my word for it, a report will reach the Three before dawn—and, who knows? the spy may twist the story against you. You shouldn’t lead Marco into scrapes like this. You know how stern the government is at the slightest danger to one of the nobility. Marco can’t be touched for a mere police offence—otherwise, what would be the use of being a noble? But you, Giacomo, you know you’re not privileged. Well, well, I’ll be up at dawn, and put you right with the Council . . . Come in, come in!”

This last to a sudden knocking.

“Excellency,” said Felice, bowing in the doorway, “a messenger from the Three. . . .”

"Quick work, by God!" said Casanova admiringly.

"Sit still, lads," said Bragadin, bustling from his chair as quickly as his gouty legs permitted, "and wait for me. I'll see justice is done."

For half an hour Casanova sat yawning while Marco tried to involve him in a future water festival, where there would be music and ice-cream and respectable young ladies . . . And then the Senator spared him further evasions by bustling happily into the room, chuckling, and rubbing his hands.

"Well, lads," he announced importantly, "we've cooked that rascal's goose for him. He'll be arrested at dawn and expelled from Venetian territory. . . ."

"What!" interrupted Marco, "arrested? Expelled? Simply for firing a shot somewhere near a man whose existence he never even knew of and who (I blush to say it) was helping to do him an injury. . . ."

"Injury!" exclaimed Casanova, "ask Marietta."

"Injury!" the Senator echoed indignantly, paying no attention to Giacomo. "You, Marco, a patrician say that? It is the foundation of our republican liberty that the security of the State—that is, the patricians—makes the safety of the people."

And he pursed his lips with such a look of determination that Marco dared not hint at any more political and social heresies.

"Apropos," Casanova broke in carelessly, "what about me?"

"You, dear Giacomo," said the old man affectionately, "you are as dear to me as an only son—more so, since the Heavenly Spirits have granted you knowledge of their mysteries. But you have nothing to do with this affair—you are not a noble. . . ."

"I don't mean that," said Casanova impatiently, who like most people hated to be reminded that he wasn't a gentleman by birth. "How about the girl? Marietta?"

"Pest!" exclaimed the Senator, looking surprised. "We forgot about her. I suppose she'll go with her uncle. Unless

she wants to put her name on the list of public women."

"And spare the blushes of a moral people . . ." added Marco ironically.

"Apropos morals," said the Senator, not wanting to follow up Marco's line of thought, "if you go on like this, *abbate*, how do you expect to be made a bishop?"

"Oh, I'll be a bishop *in partibus infidelium*," Casanova retorted carelessly, "and do as my flock does."

"But let us be serious," said the Senator, putting on that look which with official men does duty for wisdom. "You are in deacon's orders. If you are to have a career, you'll soon have to be priest. If you were to go on then as you do now—even a tenth part—you'd be disgraced, a scandal, imprisoned, excommunicated, may the Blessed Virgin avert it! I should really like to know, Giacomo, why the devil a man with a temperament and mind like yours ever dreamed of entering the Church!"

Casanova rounded on him so swiftly that the old man flinched instinctively.

"I'll tell you," he said. "You do well to ask why the devil I did it. The name of that devil is Necessity."

"Where's the necessity to play the hypocrite?" said Marco hotly.

"Giacomo doesn't mean that," the Senator interposed hastily, seeing a look of wrath on Casanova's face. "Tell us your meaning, my son."

"I said Necessity, and I mean Necessity," said Casanova a bit grimly. "Look. You are patricians. Brains or no brains, you inherit the earth and enjoy the fruits thereof. But look at my case—I have brains without money, education without rank, ambition without opportunity. How can I rise? Am I to sell sausage and anchovies? Or eat rich men's crumbs for a lifetime? Or be a cut-purse? The Church, the Church is the only way. . . ."

"Well, is it?" asked Marco doubtfully. "When one fat sinecurist holds forty benefices and . . ."

"Besides," the Senator broke in, "let these tales of cards and drinking and girls—especially the girls—reach the

Archbishop and he'll give you a benefice. Bread and water in a cell."

"Why don't you give it up?" said Marco. "Our people are lax, but they don't like such impudence. Things they turn from in disgust in a churchman they'd laugh at in a soldier. The Republic has an army. . . ."

Casanova stood up, yawning again.

"Time for bed," he remarked carelessly.

"But think of what we've said," the Senator urged. "Marco's right. With your physique and—er—type of morals, you ought to be a soldier."

"Do you suppose I rejected the life of a cut-purse to become a cut-throat?" said Casanova bitterly. "Besides, a churchman's robe and reputation have their uses for a gambler. People expect a soldier to know how to handle cards, but they're apt to think an *abbate* doesn't know a spade from a diamond . . . But never mind that. I'll . . ."

What Signor Casanova was about to remark his companions never knew. Through the noises of the storm there came from the canal side of the palace a muffled crash, men's voices shouting in anger, then crying for help, ending with a woman's scream. The three men stared at each other with that particular expression of stupid consternation which comes over the human face at the moment of some entirely unexpected and still not determined calamity.

The first to recover was, of course, the quick-witted Casanova. With a terrific shout—which meant nothing but the release of nervous energy—he rushed from the room, down the great entrance stairs; wrenched open the doors and stood peering from the landing-steps, lashed by wind and rain. The sudden transition from the lighted room left him blinded, but in the ray of light from the open door he caught a glimpse of an over-turned gondola and human forms struggling in the wind-lashed water. He heard the woman's voice again; saw a gleam of white clothes, and without a moment's hesitation flung himself into the canal.

The icy wetness hit Casanova with a shock which left him gasping, fighting to get his breath and keep his own head up

in the swirling waters. Using all his great strength and energy, he managed to seize the white form just as it was sinking. Instantly, with that blind destructive instinct of the drowning, the woman clutched him; and but for his energy and self-control Casanova would have been dragged down to death by her. Somehow he tore free, made a terrific effort which enabled him to reach the last of the Ca' Bragadin mooring posts, and clung there desperately holding the dead or unconscious body in the other arm. He shouted for help towards the little knot of figures he saw confusedly on the water stairs.

Marco and the Senator, followed by a dozen menservants, had rushed after Casanova, and succeeded in rescuing three men. Two of them were gondoliers, the other their employer who looked extremely ridiculous with his shaved, wigless head and soaked finery of silks and satins. In the confusion and babble the voices of the gondoliers were heard bawling that they had been intentionally run down by a strange craft.

"Be silent, fools!" said the man arrogantly. "Don't try to excuse your clumsiness by . . . But where is the lady?"

"Is she your wife?" asked Marco.

"I am responsible for her life . . ." he began.

"Listen!" Bragadin interrupted, "I hear something."

"It's Giacomo!" shouted Marco excitedly. "Hold on, lad, we're coming!"

"My son! He is like a son to me!" wailed the old Senator, losing his control. "Save him, Marco! Felice, Zorze, ten ducats if you save him!"

This was not so easy as it sounded. The mooring post Casanova clung to was out of reach of the steps, and above it on the land side was bare marble wall and heavily barred windows. The wind and the swirl of the tide made it impossible for him to swim back to the stairs, and the Senator and serving-men seemed to have lost their heads and did nothing but clamour and wave their arms, while the stranger looked on contemptuously.

In moments of human panic either somebody asserts his moral power and takes control, or there is a degrading rush

back to the mud of cowardice and selfishness. Here it was Marco who pushed aside the Senator and took control of the servants. At his orders, they brought rope and torches which smoked and flared and hissed in wind and rain, and threw a weird red light over the water and the marble palace front. After several unsuccessful efforts, Marco succeeded in getting a rope to his friend, who held grimly to it as the servants cautiously hauled him to safety.

As so often happens with the passionately organized Italian, Casanova was yellow pale from emotion and exertion. Yet as eager hands dragged him up the steps he still, almost unconsciously, carried the girl's body—as easily, it seemed to Marco, as if she had been a child. Her long dark hair hung dripping or clung in wet strands to his shoulder and white shirt, and her eyes were closed.

“Is she dead?” asked the stranger, and then without waiting for an answer: “Give her to me.”

Casanova did not seem to hear what was said. He was looking down at the girl's face, white and silent in the bend of his arm. It is true that this Venetian Don Juan was always “falling in love” and that each time it was “different” and “the most beautiful woman” he had ever seen was going to be his life-long passion. But this time perhaps it was different. At least Casanova really thought so, as he looked down on the girl and through their thin wet clothes felt a thrilling glow as her cold breast was warmed by contact with him. Yes, that was the familiar sparkle and delight of the senses; but what was new was that this Don Juan, this professional gambler, this dabbler in occult cheating, this cynic and adventurer suddenly felt ashamed of himself and his life.

“Let me take her! Give her to me, sir!” the stranger's harsh voice broke in. But Casanova still ignored him. Perhaps it would be truer to say that he was so much absorbed by the girl and his feelings about her that he did not register what was said. At all events, ignoring the man's outstretched hands and disregarding the faces and staccato enquiries of his friends, Casanova pushed through them

and ran up the stairs with the girl's body still in his arms.

The stranger turned fiercely on old Bragadin.

"What is the meaning of this outrage, sir? You will find to your cost that I'm not a man to be insulted without taking bitter vengeance!"

But a Senator of Venice, standing on the steps of his own palace, with his retainers beside him and the power of the Most Serene Republic behind him, was not to be intimidated by any man living.

"Sir," said he, fishing for his snuff-box as calm brought back the memory of important things, "let us go and see. Be good enough to enter my house."

The stranger was too angry to be amused by this coolness, and sprang up the stair. Marco was ahead of him, while the Senator stayed to see the doors relocked and the torches extinguished. He ordered that the two gondoliers should be given dry clothes, food and wine, and placidly mounted the stairs, following a trail of water drips which led him to one of his *salons*.

As he stood in the door he registered instantly one of those pictures of life which stay with a man indefinitely. It is true that what mainly occupied Bragadin's mind was the trivial thought that his mother had spent three years working the embroidery of the couch on which the young woman now lay and that her wet clothes would ruin it. But what he unconsciously memorized was the look on Casanova's face as he knelt beside the girl, holding one of her hands which he gently smoothed between his own, while he gazed at her beautiful face and the flurry of her hair. Opposite him stood the stranger storming in a particularly useless fit of resentment, while young Marco stood by with all the helplessness of the healthy young male when a woman is ill.

It really seemed, the Senator thought a little anxiously, as if the stranger would attack Giacomo if he didn't loose her hand and stop looking as if he were going to kiss her. He was spared the degrading trouble of having to do something about it by a sudden irruption of serving-women, who managed to sweep the stranger and Marco to one side while,

with instant comprehension, they left Casanova holding her hand.

The stranger rushed up to Bragadin.

"Are you the master of this palace, sir?" he enquired, rage bringing out his foreign accent.

"I am, sir," the Senator replied courteously. "Let me congratulate you on your happy escape from . . ."

"I am not interested in your compliments, sir," he retorted dryly. "Kindly order your follower to leave the lady to other hands, or . . ."

"That 'follower' is my friend," Marco interposed, "and merely saved her from drowning. . . ."

The stranger whirled round upon him with an energy to impress even a Venetian noble.

"Do you know who I am, sir?" he asked. "Do you know me? I am Baron von Schaumburg."

There was a moment of pure consternation, followed by silence. The women ceased their twittering, Casanova dropped the girl's hand, Bragadin and Marco turned pale and seemed to retreat from some appalling threat. It was not the Baron who frightened them; it was the laws of Venice. Under that curious constitution it was death by beheading for any patrician to associate with a foreign ambassador—so suspicious was that oligarchy of nobles even of one another, so careful to shut off every possible chance of foreign conspiracy and intrigue against their power.

Again it was Casanova who reacted first.

"My lord," he said, "may I introduce Matteo Giovanni Bragadin, patrician and Senator; Marco Valieri, patrician and future Senator."

It was now the Baron's turn to look startled.

"Gentlemen," he said hurriedly, and in a very different tone, "I ask your pardon. What is to be done? I am of course aware of the strange and ruthless law that might punish you by death for even this brief and involuntary association with me. . . ."

"Nothing could be simpler," Casanova intervened, his adventurer's wits working fast. "I am not a patrician. I can

therefore act as escort to your Excellency to the embassy—on foot or in my own gondola, as you choose. As to the lady . . .”

“Sir,” said the Baron coldly, “I have not the honour of your acquaintance.

“It is Giacomo Casanova,” exclaimed the Senator. “He is as a son to me, sir!”

The Baron bowed carelessly to Casanova, then half turning his back on him—enough to imply deconsideration, but not enough to justify a challenge—addressed the Senator:

“If it were not futile,” he said politely, “I should apologize to your Excellency for the trouble I give your household, and the danger I have so unintentionally brought on two gentlemen of rank. . . . But what has happened to those rascals of mine? Did they meet their deserts in the canal, or did somebody save their worthless lives?”

“Sir, they are warming themselves in my kitchen and—I hope—drinking my best wine,” said Bragadin coldly, resenting the Teutonic contempt for servants who after all were Venetians.

“Then,” said the Baron with his exact politeness, “will you be good enough to send for them? I shall go back to the embassy on foot, and they can carry the lady. Tomorrow . . .”

“But it will kill her!” said Casanova vehemently. “Your Excellency can’t mean it! After that shock and chill she must be put to bed here, we must get a doctor and . . .”

“May I trouble your Excellency to send the order to my servants?” said the Baron, completely ignoring Casanova, who stood silent, biting his lip. The swift look from Senator Bragadin and flicker of surprise on Marco’s face were not needed to tell him that he had made a blunder, and that the arrogance of the Don Juan of burgesses’ ladies was being swiftly punished. With Schaumburg he was in a different world, a class where intelligence was valued and practised, where under the urbane mask of good manners people were intensely aware of each other, correctly reading and guessing motives however carefully concealed or even when they

were only half-conscious. Casanova had betrayed himself more than once to the quick-eyed Baron.

Even if the Senator and Marco had wanted to help Casanova in this latest adventure—which they certainly did not, guessing the danger of it more shrewdly than he did, and thinking of it as merely one more deplorable caprice—they could not have done so. Indeed, the conventions of almost any age would have been against the girl's remaining in a house of bachelors with only serving-women. . . . But the frown left the Baron's face as Senator Bragadin at once sent a servant for the gondoliers, and despatched others to find a litter which had been used by his mother in her old age.

"I bring you gentlemen nothing but trouble," he said, as they moved ceremoniously through the suite of apartments to the entrance stairway on the land side of the palace. "It is scarcely necessary for me to suggest that, as patricians . . ." and the ignoring of Casanova in the mere intonation of that "as patricians" was a revelation . . . "as patricians your only course is to go at once to any friend you have among the Three and report exactly what has happened. Tomorrow, as soon as protocol permits, I shall make an official report to his Excellency, the Doge; but as he has no power, the only use of the *démarche* will be to confirm your account. The accident cannot be concealed. Some spy will already have reported it. Meanwhile, my warmest thanks to you for rescuing us. . . ."

"It was my friend, Casanova, who heard your call for help and made the most important rescue," said Marco, who was young and impetuous and not quite broken to the ways of the world.

"Of course my warmest and undying gratitude goes to him," said von Schaumburg, not even glancing at Casanova, and speaking in tones of the coldest lack of gratitude. "But here comes the litter, and I see the lady has recovered. Farewell, gentlemen. Some day, when the Empress no longer needs my poor services as her unworthy representative, I shall return to Venice as a private gentleman, and try once more to thank you."

He stood aside to allow the litter to pass. The scene was curious, though it did not seem so to those taking part in it. Servants with torches stood on the lowest step or waited outside in the sweeping wind and rain which made the crude lights hiss and flare. At the top of the stairs the Baron, Bragadin and Marco stood in a little group, and apart from them stood Casanova, still dishevelled and dripping wet from his plunge in the canal, all watching the litter as four servants carried it cautiously down the worn marble stairs.

The women had done their best to dry and neaten the girl's hair, had dressed her in some of their clothes and wrapped her in a cloak against the rain which would drive on the open litter. As she passed, Bragadin and Marco bowed in the ceremonious manner of the time and country, but she did not notice them. She was looking at Casanova as she lay propped up in the litter. Of course she could tell at once from his drenched appearance that it was he who had pulled her from the canal, but as the shock of the icy water had almost at once rendered her unconscious she knew only what the serving-women had told her—that this Signor Casanova had saved her at the risk of his own life. But gratitude is the weakest of emotions even in the young and virtuous, and what held her eyes—they were blue, Casanova noted with surprise—were the eyes of Casanova, almost timidly for once telling an admiration which was habitually overbold. The look on both sides lasted but a fraction of a minute, long enough to make the other's face unforgettable to each and for the kindling of the spark in both, though no word was spoken.

Then the litter passed from the lighted house into the dark narrow *calle*, the doors swung to, and Casanova remembered that he was cold and very wet. Nobody paid any attention to him.

THE servants had forgotten in all the excitement to keep up the charcoal brazier in Casanova's bedroom, and the huge lofty room was so chilly that he began to shiver as he pulled off his wet clothes. An interrupted love-making, a pistol shot fired at him in anger, a tussle with a gondola in a gale, two duckings, a rescue and a head over heels tumble into a new love—all that formed a little too much excitement in one night even for the adventurous Giacomo Casanova. Now that the excitement was over he began to feel let down and neglected—why, damn it, nobody had even said “thank you” or “bravo” for pulling the girl out of the grave at the risk of his own life!

He jumped into bed and pulled the blankets over him, feeling very sorry for himself and still unable to stop his teeth from chattering with cold. From the diminishing noise of the wind through the carved Istrian cornices and about the funnel-shaped chimneys, he judged that *bora* was at last abating. Then he heard a muffled din of voices and saw the reflected glare of torches, as Bragadin and Marco Valieri set out by gondola to placate their suspicious cousins and rulers. A silly business, Casanova reflected; imagine men having to turn out in the middle of a night like this to purge themselves of the imaginary crime of having spoken to the ambassador of another country! By some oversight the name of Casanova was not written in the Golden Book of the Venetian patricians, and so he naturally saw the absurd, criminal and oppressive side of that class.

All men, especially rogues, enjoy feeling righteously indignant; and Casanova contrived to work up enough warmth against the nobles to stop his shivering. But warmth did not bring sleep. On the contrary, as he grew a little more physically comfortable Casanova, in spite of his fatigue and exertions, grew more wakeful. It is unlikely that anyone with even the slightest knowledge of Casanova would believe that he deliberately lay awake to lament patriotically over

the defective constitution of the Venetian Republic.

A woman! There was nothing new or surprising about that phenomenon for Casanova even in his younger days. What was new and surprising was the quality of his feelings about this girl—whose name, even, he did not know. Romantic love had not at that date returned to literature and the fine arts, an elegant not to say frivolous sensuality being then the fashion. But romantic love occurs even in China, where it is completely despised; and was not uncommon in pre-Romantic Europe where the convention of superficial gallantry sometimes led to the real thing.

At any rate as Signor Casanova lay wakeful in his gradually warming bed he very seriously told himself that this love was “different” from any of the too numerous love affairs which had hitherto occupied him. It is true that he had said this to himself before; he had also said it at least twice to Marco in comparative seriousness and as a matter of course to every one of the ladies involved, whose names he did not at the moment fully recall or even wish to recall. . . .

It was awkward not to have a name to give the love of one’s life—not the merest peg on which to rhyme an Italian madrigal or to scan out some lame Latin elegiacs. And still more awkward was entering her life in the unpleasant role of life-saver. A devilish handicap with any woman, who had much rather squander herself on a rascal than gratefully reward a virtuous saviour with her person. Damn the rescue, thought Casanova, it is the worst opening for a seduction I ever had.

“Seduction”—the idea seemed to have lost its perennial charm, for Casanova thoroughly believed he was the prey and not the prey in his amorous encounters. In the first place the word shocked his feelings, though he would not have acknowledged it to any man for the world. And then it opened a most unpleasant vista—for, what was the Austrian ambassador doing alone with a beautiful girl in a gondola after midnight? And the fact that the night was a stormy one seemed only to stress the urgency of the occasion, especially as Casanova could not but remember the Baron’s evident

repugnance to him. He wished the Baron had been drowned. Alternatively, he wished that he had strangled the Baron; that he had knocked the Baron down; that he had challenged the Baron to a duel. . . .

Casanova became aware that his nose was bleeding, an accident that often occurred to him when he could find no means of expressing his fits of temper or amorousness. Tonight he was suffering from both. He groped his way out of bed and across the room to his wash-stand, where he checked the bleeding with cold water. He listened. There was no sound but the wind of the dying storm. He felt his way across the familiar room in the darkness and peered through the shutter. There was not a light on the Grand Canal. . . .

On an impulse he did not try to analyse, still less restrain, Casanova lit a rush-light and began dressing. If you can't sleep, get up and go out—it was simple advice, which Casanova himself always followed. But he was more than half-way down the great staircase, finding his way cat-like in the dark, before he asked himself where he was going? It was about two o'clock in the morning, and with a storm like this there would have been none of the usual night life, even in Venice which did most of its living by night. Casanova stopped to ponder in the darkness on this little problem when a slight noise from the kitchen quarters reached his ears. That gave him an idea.

Moving steal hily along familiar stairways and corridors he came suddenly into the immense kitchen, surprising the four men who had helped to carry the litter. They were drinking wine and feasting on the remains of a ham and talking endlessly over what had happened. Servants, especially Italian servants, know everything, and—rascal to rascal—a servant of Bragadin's was usually a friend of Casanova's. He hoped to find the girl's name, what was her relation to Schaumburg, what she was doing in Venice, where she lived. But for once in his life Casanova came on surprising difficulties—these quick-witted Venetians had suddenly become stupid, didn't understand his questions,

knew nothing, had heard nothing, surmised nothing. All they knew was that they had gone as far as the Campo San Luca. There they had been met by one of the gondoliers bringing a number of the Baron's servants, and had been sent home.

"Bribed and threatened by the Baron," said Casanova to himself, as he left Ca' Bragadin and made his way through the network of narrow streets which make a plan of Venice look like the drawing of some monstrous brain. The city was darker than usual under the impenetrable night sky, and most of the little shrine lamps which were supposed to light the streets after dark had been blown out by wind or quenched by rain. When Casanova reached the Austrian embassy it was even more uncommunicative and discouraging than Bragadin's servants. The great doors were locked, the lower windows barred and shuttered, and neither light nor sound came from any part of the old fortress-palace.

This was emphatically a dead end. There was nothing to be done here, and he might just as well have stayed warm in bed, instead of exhausting himself after all the exertions of the night. Feeling very foolish, Casanova turned away from the palace and crossed to the other side of the little Campo where he stood close up against the wall. What to do next. Was "she" in that palace? As guest or prisoner, mistress or ward? If she lived there, how could even a Casanova come at her past all the bars and watchers and spies and guards?

A slight noise from a window above had him instantly on the alert. A sudden spring brought him under the shelter of a projecting cornice, and at the same moment a heavy stone or weight of some kind crashed on the ground where he had stood a second before. Casanova did not stay to protest or to argue the point—a good gambler knows when the cards are running against him, and Casanova did not need any further hint that frontal attacks on the Baron's secret would surely end in one of those regrettable accidents so frequent in Venice. Without a moment's hesitation he whirled out of that Campo as speedily as if the sun had been shining and the way perfectly plain; nor did he pause for an instant until he

was safely back in Ca' Bragadin, this time quite ready for sleep.

3

CASANOVA awoke to see thin arrows of intensely bright sunshine darting through chinks in the shutters. He heard the shout of "Sta-li!" as a gondolier glided from a *rio* into the main canal.

Casanova slipped out of bed, went to the window and opened it, throwing back the green shutters. For a moment he was dazzled by the light pouring down from a clean washed sky, reflected from the glittering water and palaces of fretted white stones. A barge drifted gently past, piled high with brilliantly coloured fruits and vegetables. From the distance came sounds of music, street cries, laughter, all the confused murmur of the gay Venetian crowd. Overhead the twittering swifts darted through liquid air like little black arrow-heads. Venice was still Venice, and it was carnival. Casanova took in deep breaths of the rain-washed morning air.

"There is happiness in the world!" he said aloud, for no particular reason, except that the day was fine and that he was in love, and for no reason whatever felt arrogantly confident that she loved him. He turned away and began to dress, whistling the refrain of a popular song all Venice was singing and humming in those unclouded days—"Quella zente che gà in bocca 'l riso", "the nation with laughter in its mouth". Isn't that the way to take life? Casanova reflected pulling on his satin breeches, with laughter in one's mouth? And to think that on a morning like this there are people worrying themselves about the definition of God, the form of government and how much money they are owed!

Going downstairs Casanova found Marco wrapped in a gorgeous dressing-gown, drinking coffee and hot milk, and eating those crescent rolls which commemorate the defeat of the Turks outside Vienna in 1683.

At the invitation conveyed by a wave of Marco's hand, Casanova sat down to breakfast with gusto.

"I've the appetite of a horse this morning," he remarked as he lavishly buttered a roll.

"You generally have," said Marco.

Casanova filled a delicate Chinese bowl with *caffè latte* and his mouth with roll and butter; nor did he pause until he had cleared the table, whereupon he clapped his hands for a servant and to Marco's scandal gravely ordered breakfast, as if he had eaten nothing and Marco had made an enormous meal.

"By the way," Casanova interrupted Marco's just but futile complaints, "what happened with the Three last night?"

"How should I know?" Marco answered. "You know perfectly well I'm not a member of the Council. Bragadin saw them. I was only examined as a witness by one of the secretaries."

"But what's to happen? Are you to be beheaded for high treason? Or are you graciously allowed to live a little longer?"

"We're to live." Marco laughed. "The Senator said he had some difficulty in persuading some of the old suspicious ones that the wrecked gondola in the middle of a storm at midnight was not all a plot on our part to hatch treason with Schaumburg."

"And the girl?" Casanova asked with a pretence of careless indifference which failed to deceive even Marco.

"You are advised to forget all about her," he said, a little stiffly.

"You always begin by saying that, Marco, and I always begin by paying no attention to your advice. Why do you keep on doing it? It's monotonous. Besides, it's unjust. When did I ever advise you to forget a girl you wanted?"

"When was I ever silly enough to let you know which girl I wanted?" Marco retorted, and then trying to change the subject, "I hear Goldoni is putting on a new comedy tonight. Shall we go?"

Casanova leaned forward and laid his lean powerful hand lightly on Marco's wrist.

"Old friend," said Casanova, "don't try to put me off. This isn't just a whim for a pretty light o' heel. It's serious. Tell me who she is. What is her name? Where does she live? What is she doing in Venice? Is Schaumburg her lover? And she's not Italian, I'm sure. Where does she come from?"

"I don't know."

"You'll help me to find out?"

Marco looked embarrassed.

"Not this time, Giacomo," he urged. "Really not. It's dangerous."

"Dangerous!" Casanova pounced on the word, like a feline on some valuable prey. "Then you do know something about her?"

"I tell you I know nothing about her."

"Then why do you say she's dangerous?"

Marco hesitated a moment, then seemed to make up his mind.

"Only a hint dropped by somebody as we were leaving the Ducal Palace last night, or rather this morning."

"Somebody? What somebody?"

"Messer Grande, if you must know."

Casanova whistled, withdrew his hand from Marco's wrist, and lay back in his chair, looking up at the ceiling which was painted with allegories of the Four Seasons in the style of Luca Giordano.

"I wonder why?" Casanova asked of a smiling almost naked young woman who represented Spring.

There was no answer, and Marco sat with his head lowered and his lips compressed, in an attitude Casanova knew from experience meant the obstinate silence of a patrician refusing to give the slightest hint of an official secret. In the silence they could hear the twitter of the swifts hunting for gnats, and from the distance the shrill voice of a woman selling grapes: "*Ah! chè bell' uva! Ah! chè bell' uva!*"—"Oh, what lovely grapes!"

Casanova stood up, stretched, yawned, whistled the refrain of the song about laughter.

"I'll see you presently," he threw over his shoulder as he walked out of the room.

Thus nonchalantly Casanova took temporary leave of his most devoted though perhaps not most useful friend—for Marco would not have much money until the Senator his father died. Still humming "*Quella zente che gà in bocca 'l riso*" Casanova returned to his dressing-room, where a barber and valet awaited him—at the expense of Senator Bragadin, naturally, for he could not expect his distinguished guest to shave himself or go to the fatiguing trouble of putting on his own clothes in the morning. Besides, the barber from outside and the valet from inside Ca' Bragadin were two excellent sources of information for one who lived by his wits and by knowing things he wasn't supposed to know. For if there was anything in eighteenth-century Venice unknown to the barbers and valets it must either have been excessively uninteresting or superhumanly secret.

These two omniscient chatter-boxes would have seemed the obvious means for Casanova to find what he wanted to know about his unknown girl. But his failure with the litter-bearers had made him cautious about giving himself away any further, for every question he asked told these artful gossips something about him. And if Casanova could pay for information with jokes and promises and a little silver, Schaumburg could pay with eloquent gold. So, though Casanova freely discussed last night's happenings and accepted smilingly the voluble homage of his attendants, he said no more about the unknown than was needed to show that he was not being significantly reticent about her. And then he turned the talk on to poor Marietta, revealing much that a gentleman would have considered private.

An hour later Casanova stepped from his room, shaved, powdered, perfumed, as complete a dandy as ever wore wrist ruffles and a flowered waistcoat. Still humming the laughter song—being in love was always a cheerful thing, not an occasion for poetic melancholy, with Casanova—he made

his way to the *piano nobile* of Ca' Bragadin, the main living-rooms of the palace where at that hour he was certain to find the Senator with his two special friends the Senator Barbaro and the Senator Ziani.

In their youth these old men had been enthusiastic amorists, pursuing all sorts and conditions of women with energy and spirit. But the passing years had damped down their fires. They now persuaded themselves that the sexual abstinence forced on them by age was meritorious, a necessary sacrifice to the occult fantasies which were then fashionable among those who considered themselves above "prejudices" and "fanaticism". United in their credulity about the supernatural, they were not divided in their esteem for Casanova which was ill-judged and based on unstable grounds. Instead of liking him for his youth, his vitality, his genial scoundrelism and happy temperament, or even for his skill at cards and women, they preferred to admire him for an imaginary influence with equally imaginary "Spirits", and for his skill with a kind of mathematical ouija-board which Casanova had invented and absurdly named "Solomon's Key".

Casanova's method was that of most charlatans—he had sized up the characters and "humours" of the old gentlemen pretty accurately, and knew just how far he could go and just about what they wanted to hear. Every morning or evening, when he consulted "Solomon's Key" for them, he would build up pyramids and pentacles of numbers at random, all the time worming out of them the particular secret of the day. When he was about certain that he had guessed what it was they wanted to hear, he pretended to "resolve the pyramid" and forthwith translated the numbers into a more or less oracular response in words. When he knew exactly what the old fools wanted the response was clear; when he was more or less uncertain the response was more or less obscure; when, as sometimes happened, he made a complete mistake, Casanova immediately discovered a flaw in the "calculations" and brought back smiles by reversing the oracle. Yet, so curious and contradictory is the nature of man, that Casanova's success in cheating his senatorial friends would have been

much less striking if he had not partially believed in "Solomon's Key" himself. A similar mixture of credulity and cynicism explains his successes with cards and women.

As he expected, Casanova found the old men patiently waiting for him in one of the smaller *salons*—a sunny room of the usual baroque kind with painted ceiling, frescoed walls and gilt embroidered furniture. There was much good will and excitement for the hero of last night's rescue, and then much garrulous conversation as Casanova gravely erected Solomon's Key and answered the important questions on which the opinion of the Spirits was required—should Ziani disinherit a nephew who had gone to the bad and become a silk merchant, should Bragadin change his short wigs for more stylish ones, should Ziani take his daughters to the opera this season? And so on and so on. Being in a benevolent mood Casanova saved the wicked nephew his inheritance, let the girls go to the show, and prevented Bragadin from making a fool of himself.

But Solomon's Key had not finished, it seemed.

"The Spirits seem to have something they wish to tell us," said Casanova, and the old men crowded round to watch the mounting mysterious figures as excited as children at the promise of a party.

"It seems to be about an Undine or Water Spirit who has entered our lives," Casanova continued, still totting up his meaningless figures at an enormous speed, but carefully watching them. He saw they looked dubious at this, but boldly played his next move.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, as if something most unexpected had been revealed to him. "The message concerns the young woman in the canal last night. She is a Water Spirit and was in no danger of drowning, but we must find out at once where she is and communicate with her and . . ."

But even Casanova's impudence deserted him, and his voice trailed away as he saw the expressions on their faces, particularly Bragadin's.

"Are you sure the Key gave that message? Have you interpreted it correctly?" Bragadin asked with great anxiety,

picking up the paper Casanova had covered with weird-looking calculations.

"It can't be correct," said Barbaro, shaking his head.

"Impossible!" said Ziani.

Casanova gave a little soundless sigh of vexation, though the grave concentrated look on his gambler's face never changed for an instant. He knew these old patricians. Nothing on earth or even in the world of imagined Spirits could make them go contrary to the one power on earth they felt to be omnipotent—the power of the three State Inquisitors of Venice, headed by the terrible "Messer Grande", the Grand Inquisitor of State. Yet their very concern told him something—that for the ever mysterious "reasons of State" the rulers of Venice intended that Casanova should not have this particular girl. Which, of course, made Signor Giacomo all the more determined to get her, and vegetables to the Inquisitors of State. But with them a man must go warily, oh, so warily. . . .

He pretended to work over his calculations, watched anxiously by the three old dupes.

"Ah!" he said suddenly.

"What is it?"

"That must have been when your Excellency spoke to me about your nephew," said Casanova reproachfully to Ziani, "I wrote 9425 instead of 0425. It alters the whole message. It warns us *not* to enquire about the Undine at present. It would bring us ill luck. Later on . . ."

The three unhappy old faces cleared up like magic at this. Of course, they had known all along that the holy Key could not have given such an order; Giacomo must be more careful in the future, Ziani added.

"Anyone can make a mistake," said Barbaro coming to his aid.

"Especially when you interrupt," Bragadin added reproachfully.

But they were too much relieved to quarrel even among themselves. Indeed, the sense of relief was so great that Casanova did not need to take the trouble to have Solomon's

Key tell them to lend him a hundred ducats. They patted him on the back, told him he was a fine fellow, warned him affectionately to be careful, and lent him the hundred ducats as if they ought to be grateful to him for accepting the money.

In spite of the pleasant weight of so much money in his pockets, many a man in Casanova's situation would have felt more than a little discouraged by the bleak prospect of this newest and best of all possible love affairs. With that amount of formidable opposition—a government, an ambassador, a protector and a best friend—and literally nobody to help, how could he expect to succeed? It was characteristic of the man that he felt serenely cheerful where any other intelligent person would have been depressed, and that in his newly chastened mood, he had a superstitious feeling that he must earn his right to the girl. His confidence that come what might, he would in the end find her, was part superstition, part conceit, and part a not ill-founded faith in his own amorous record.

So it was to the rhythm of this same popular song about laughter in the mouth that Casanova set out that afternoon on his quest of the unknown girl. For a day or two he scarcely hoped to see her. After a shock and ducking like that, she would stay in bed, probably with a cold, he thought realistically; but she'll come out and sooner or later . . .

He passed, without noticing it, the ornate façade of San Moise and, entering the Bocca di Piazza, stood under the colonnade seeing the picturesque noisy crowd thronging the great square of San Marco. Carnival in Venice was by no means limited to that brief season prescribed or rather tolerated by the Church. On the contrary, carnival time in Venice was at any time the government chose to proclaim it; and since carnival makes life more enjoyable and life is to be enjoyed, and since carnival is good for trade and trade is the life blood of taxes, as taxes are the life blood of governments—well, the Venetian government chose to proclaim carnival for most of the year except Lent and the very hot weather when it was pleasanter to be in one's country villa on the Brenta.

The scene Casanova gazed at with so little sense of its uniqueness, its transitory nature, its brilliant colour and picturesqueness, would certainly thrill anyone now living who could see it just as it was that sunny afternoon not two centuries ago. It was a fascinating mixture of fun-fair, masquerade, and fashionable rendezvous for half the peoples of the world. All along the sides of the great square stood raised stages with brightly coloured back-drops and painted signs, showing almost every conceivable wonder from wild lions to tame canaries, from Irish giants to Dutch dwarfs. High above the crowd, perched on slender poles, costumed monkeys nibbled nuts and lemons, and gaimaced at the jeers and roars of laughter of the good-humoured crowd. Quacks and charlatans yelled and harangued. Here was the "famous" Trinsi who pulled teeth painlessly—to the accompaniment of a trumpet, two drums and a trombone, which drowned out the shrieks of his victims. Here was the even more famous Cosmo Politano selling a "Sovereign Balm" to preserve any purchaser from death for ever. And here was the still more famous Innominato—the Nameless One—whose attendants were dressed as characters from the *Commedia dell'Arte*, and who promised to give instantly truthful answers to every question while prescribing for "all ailments, sicknesses, epidemical and physical distresses whatsoever!"

And everywhere was the ubiquitous, amazing, laughing crowd, so restless in its movements, so overwhelmingly numerous, so fancifully disguised that it was impossible even for a native to guess who were distinguished foreigners and who lighthearted Venetians got up to make fun of them. Many Venetians were wearing the national *bauta* (white mask and black domino) over gorgeously flowered clothes, but then so were many foreigners. There were sedate Spaniards and long-moustached Hungarians, lively Frenchmen and grave Turks, ponderous Englishmen and supple Greeks, Russians who were astonished at everything, and Hollanders who saw nothing to be astonished at. Mixed up with them were Venetians disguised as Spaniards, Hungarians, Frenchmen, Turks, Englishmen, Greeks, Russians, and Hollanders,

parodying their visitors with such verve and skill that they were betrayed only by the wit of their jokes and the dialect in which they were made. But it was all done with such good humour, such obvious joy of life, such complete absence of nationalist arrogance and class spite that nobody but an idiot could have been offended, and the laughing gaiety of mankind answered the laughing sky:

“Quella zente che gà in bocca ’l riso!”

Casanova left the comparative shelter and began to push his way slowly through the throng towards the great church of San Marco and the Ducal palace. Unlike most of the other native Venetians he went unmasked, and for an obvious reason—if by any chance the beautiful unknown was in the crowd, he naturally wanted her to recognize him. As it was, he was seen and constantly recognized by masks who called to him by name, but received nothing in reply but a smile and a wave of the hand, even when they were women.

There was no hurry, life itself was unhurried, and Casanova was completely at one with his surroundings. He turned into the Piazzetta, facing the lagoon and the island of San Giorgio, and found it equally thronged with masks, masqueraders, idlers, strollers, side-shows, monsters and monkeys. At last he dropped into a café where he dawdled away the hours over a cup of coffee and a glass of ice-water, talking to anyone, whether stranger or acquaintance, who stopped for a minute, but keeping his eyes on every unmasked woman, until it was time for a frugal meal and then—the Ridotto.

Why the Ridotto? Well, there was more than one reason. Not only was gambling so fashionable that it was almost obligatory on the upper classes to spend some time there, but the building itself was the rendezvous of all foreigners and visitors—a little like the contemporary Pump Room at Bath. Then, Venetian patricians were not allowed there since the foreign ambassadors were, and to keep a check on them everybody had to unmask. And there was another very important reason why Casanova should be there—he had suddenly run into a streak of good luck at *faro*, which he was exploiting like the gambler he was.

So the days passed almost monotonously alike, with only the excitement of the card-table at night to keep him going. He saw no sign of his unknown, heard nothing, never mentioned her name. Even Marco thought Casanova had put her from his mind as that most useless kind of woman, the unattainable. And it was just here that Marco was wrong, for underneath the eighteenth-century Casanova there lurked the eternal Romantic, whose only real love is the unattainable and the impossible.

Casanova's run of luck at the tables had attracted a good deal of attention, which could not have been better for his purpose. People talked about it, and came to watch him, taking the most minute notes about his play in the hopes of discovering his "system", whereas in fact, Casanova was simply playing on "hunches" and trusting to the run of the cards.

One evening he decided to stop earlier than usual, simply on a hunch—and after pocketing his winnings went to lounge with the throng in the ante-room, to look and be looked at. Under the soft glow of the candles, multiplied by mirrors and broken into diamond points by the cut crystal pendants of the chandeliers, Casanova stood playing with a lorgnette and glancing at the face of every woman who entered. Suddenly just at his elbow he heard a woman's voice say: "*Le voilà*", and felt a light touch on his sleeve.

He whirled around, but at that moment several young women accompanied by their *cavalieri serventi* passed in a laughing group, so that he could not tell who had spoken and certainly did not recognize his unknown among them. And as he had never heard her voice, he could not be certain that she had said: "There he is!" in French. It might have been another woman who had said it, and in spite of the touch on the sleeve, it might not have been meant for him. What to do? Casanova's impulse was to run after the group now vanishing through the wide doorway; but he checked it, hoping that "the voice" would still be in the buildings and that he would see her. A quick tour of all the rooms convinced him that if his unknown had been there and had spoken, she had gone.

Irresolutely, he dawdled around for a time and then, as the crowd thinned out and even the gamblers flagged, Casanova wearily made his way out of the building and called for his gondola. Just as he was stepping into the boat, he felt a woman's hand clutch his, press a folded paper into his hand, then as suddenly release it, while a clatter of high-heeled shoes told of flight. Before Casanova could get back to land from the rocking gondola, the woman had disappeared—if it was a woman, as the hand and footsteps suggested.

Calling to the gondolier to wait, Casanova rushed back to the lighted Ridotto and unfolded the note. It contained exactly three words in French:

"Merci. Adieu. Henriette."

4

FOR two days Casanova walked on air with his head in a cloud of dreams. He knew her name and she herself had told him. And he knew, or thought he knew, that this meant she was in love with him. In his experience: "Thank you. Adieu," meant "I love you. Wait till tomorrow." Her name was French and she had written in French, which must mean that she was of that nation. He would study French, but first they must meet. And his cloud of dreams flushed golden as he thought of kissing her mouth. . . .

For two days he lived this paradise of anticipation, making no alteration in the routine of his days—spending his mornings with Marco and the old men, his afternoons strolling round the Piazza inexhaustibly amused by the changing scene, his evenings gambling and mostly winning at the Ridotto. Superstitiously he took these gambling gains as a good omen—where was there ever a love affair that did not need money?

With the third day Casanova came out of his cloud of dreams and began to lose some of his aplomb. Something evidently had gone wrong since she neither wrote nor let

him see her—but what? He worried over it and began to lose at the tables, sometimes making a sudden recovery but on the whole gradually losing his winnings. A curious frenzy came upon him during which he hardly slept or ate, keeping himself awake by innumerable cups of strong coffee and spending every possible minute gambling at the Ridotto. His face became pale, his fever-bright eyes bloodshot, and his usually steady hand shook like a drunkard's.

In alarm the old men deputed Marco always to go out with Giacomo, adding the high-sounding but useless order, to see that he came to no harm. But what could such a satellite do with a man of Casanova's wilful determination? All that Marco in fact did or could do was to stand interminably in the Ridotto, his young face worn and grey with sleeplessness, watching his friend with a mixture of concern and exasperation.

It seemed as if the demon of Gambling himself were playing with Casanova with devilish enjoyment. He had streaks of good and bad luck, now losing fearfully, now regaining all his losses and more, only to fall once more into a spin of bad luck. Marco watched him, and Casanova seemed to him to be playing with a frantic disregard of common sense that was almost frightening, as if urging the excitement of the gambler to its utmost pitch. Why? Marco asked himself for the hundredth time as he watched and made his useless plans "to get Giacomo away".

Casanova played and lost. Ten times he played and lost, each time doubling the stake with an apparently indifferent calm Marco thought more sinister than his previous agitation. When his last gold piece was gone Casanova rose from the table, took Marco aside and said with complete nonchalance:

"I must have some more money."

"You know I haven't any left," said Marco, trying not to be reproachful.

"Can't you sell something?"

"I've sold everything I had for you," said the boy bitterly.

"Even my good name."

"How about your diamond buckles?"

"They're paste. I sold the real ones for you two days ago."

"I'd forgotten. Shall I sell mine, or try to raise a few more sequins from papa Bragadin?"

"He won't give you another copper until you stop gambling. . . ."

"The pawnbroker then. . . ."

Casanova raised ten ducats on his shoe-buckles, and in spite of Marco's pleadings, returned to the table. The game was the *faro* (or *pharaon*) which was so immensely popular in the eighteenth century and is now almost forgotten. It was played with a full pack excluding the top and bottom cards, called for some reason *soda* and *in hoc*—the latter perhaps because the pack was kept on the table in a little box. The bank put out the cards two at a time face down and the players punted on an enamelled suit of cards on a green cloth, not unlike *roulette*—the more prudent on columns and combinations, the reckless on single cards.

Marco was praying that it would soon be over and that he could get Casanova home and to bed—for poor Marco now began seriously to think that Giacomo had gone crazy for lack of sleep. . . . Five times Casanova threw a gold piece at random on a single card and five times he lost. Then he looked up at Marco with a curious smile on his face, saying:

"All I have left—on a woman." And put his last five ducats on the Queen.

He won and immediately pushed the pile of gold on to another card which also won. He did it a third time and, unbelievably, won again. People began to nudge and mutter, and idlers from other tables came over to look. Now that he had a heap of gold beside him again Casanova suddenly abandoned these desperate tactics and began to play cautiously but with an intensity of concentration that was painful. Obviously with a childish game like *faro* with the pack constantly diminishing, everything or nearly everything would depend on the gambler's ability to memorize correctly every card that had been played and turned down. His chances of winning would rise mathematically towards the end of each pack, though of course there was always the

unplayed *soda* and *in hoc* to reckon with. It was natural, then, that Casanova lost more often at the start of a pack and won more often towards the end, when he invariably raised his stakes. . . .

In three breathless hours he had broken the bank which was not allowed to lose more than five thousand sequins to one person at a sitting. He took a thousand of his winnings in gold and the balance by banker's cheque—which he had no reason to mistrust since the Ridotto was owned and operated by the government.

"What are you going to do now?" asked Marco in justifiable anxiety, as they left the Ridotto jostled by the excited crowd trying to catch a glimpse of the undeserving hero of the night.

"Sleep."

And sleep he did, with that zest above the appetites of ordinary men which seemed natural to him. Hour after hour he lay in complete oblivion, rousing himself once briefly to dismiss the servant who came for his orders, and then dropping back to sleep.

When at last he awoke, the angle of the sun shafts piercing the wooden shutters showed him that it was past noon. Casanova lay open-eyed and motionless, listening to the loved familiar noises of Venice—the splash of the oar followed by the soft thudding of ripples against the boat-side, the calls of the gondoliers, the shriller cries of the fruit and vegetable sellers, the faint scream of the darting swifts, the far-off continuous hum of voices and the scuff of shoes on paved streets from which all horses had long been banished. Only in Venice was it so pleasant to lie and listen to the music of humanity.

Casanova lay there feeling weak and contented, like a man who has just escaped from high fever and feels the beckoning charm of common life through the fading mists of convalescence. Had he forgotten Henriette? It seemed so, it seemed as if he had gambled her out of his head and heart and was prepared to follow any adventure the siren town sent his way. Was there any sense in staying faithful to a scornful

shade? And the song of the people with laughter in the mouth came to him with piercing meaning, sung by a girl's voice high up in an attic across the canal.

In the Venice of the decadence a successful gambler was more esteemed than any artist; for to get money, to get it quickly and without working was the crowd's ideal. Casanova knew his adventure at the Ridotto would recommend him to a hundred fair, frail ones, and he desperately wanted a new love affair—to make sure that he had forgotten the Henriette, whose face he yet knew with sure instinct that he would remember even in another woman's arms.

He was not wrong about the advertising value of his gambling success. That evening, for the first time in many days, he walked out masked—hoping no longer that Henriette might see him and make some sign, yet in spite of this declaration of scorn, unable to prevent himself from thinking of her as he glanced at the face of each unmasked woman.

He was so much absorbed in this unconscious or perhaps half-conscious memory of Henriette, he did not at first notice that he was being spoken to by one of those gorgeously dressed negro boys, who were then so often employed as pages by rich and fashionable Venetian women.

"Most illustrious mask," said the black boy, bowing and smiling with an irresistible mixture of impudence and good nature, "fortune has smiled on you at play, it depends on you to enjoy her bounty in another realm even more to your taste!"

This was gabbled without stops and almost without meaning, as schoolboys recite a lesson they don't understand. The contrast between this off-hand manner and the pompous words the lad had evidently been made to learn by heart was so droll that Casanova in spite of his ill humour burst out laughing.

"Most illustrious child of the Sun," he said, taking off the boy's manner, "we render you thanks. And how may this adventure be consummated?"

"You needn't make fun of me, sir," said the boy in a natural voice and with an injured look, "I only said what she told me to say."

"She? And who is she?"

"Why, my lady, to be sure, sir. Who else?"

"And what's her name, my lad?"

"You can't catch me as easy as that, sir," said the boy with a comical attempt at artfulness. "That's a secret at present. But if you should want to see her . . ."

He peered up at Casanova's mask as if trying to catch the expression of his eyes, and grinned knowingly.

"Well. If I should want to see her . . . ?"

"You will please to follow me."

And off he strutted with such an assumption of dignity that Casanova laughed again as he followed to where a gondola was moored in a *rio* behind the Procuratie Vecchie. Without stopping his chaff of the boy, Casanova noted swiftly that the gondola was of the kind used by patricians, that it had two gondoliers dressed handsomely in white with scarlet sashes, and that the usual heraldic emblems had been removed. For a fraction of a minute Casanova hesitated. It was true that the upper-class women of Venice enjoyed a freedom of action almost equal to their freedom from prejudices, but while an invitation like this might well be the advance of some charming woman, it might also be the trap of an enemy, it might even be one of those grim little jests so dear to The Three. . . .

"Adventures to the adventurous," he said half aloud, stepping into the gondola and making himself comfortable on a pile of soft cushions in the *felze*. There too he noticed that anything which might give a clue to the ownership of the boat had been removed. Looking through the side window he tried to memorize the route he was gliding through so swiftly; but the Venetian gondoliers were and are adept in twisting and turning through little-known canals, and the dimming down of the Venetian sunset colours to dove greys and velvet blacks made it hard to pick out landmarks. Glancing back into the boat Casanova noticed the boy

squatting at the entrance to the *felze*, chuckling to himself.

"Ah, there you are," said Casanova, a little annoyed by this silent mirth. "What's amusing you?"

"I was thinking how happy my lady will be to see your Excellency."

"Um," said Casanova doubtfully, "suppose you tell me her Christian name?"

The negro shook his head and grinned.

"She may have one specially composed for your Excellency."

Casanova tried the argument all experience shows is most cogent with humanity everywhere—he held out a piece of gold.

"No, sir," said the boy turning his eyes away. "What I've promised, I've promised."

"Good lad," said Casanova ingratiatingly. "Take it anyway. I can be a generous friend. . . ."

"What am I to do for it?" The lad hesitated suspiciously.

"Nothing. I'll ask some questions. Reply or not, as you choose . . . Is the lady dark or fair?"

"Your Excellency will soon see," the boy was chuckling again.

"How old?"

"I've never asked, Excellency."

"Married?"

"So they say."

"Who is her *cicisbeo*?"

"Your Excellency asks that?"

"You don't give away much, do you?" said Casanova sarcastically.

The boy did not answer for a moment, being occupied in grabbing at the landing stage where the gondola had arrived. Then as he helped Casanova ashore, he said in a very different tone:

"I am my master's faithful servant, Excellency."

"Master's?" said Casanova jokingly, but already the boy was leading him up a flight of dark stairs into a large and luxurious apartment, which Casanova immediately guessed to be one of the opulent *casini* of Venice, where such neat little apartments

abounded for those who wanted to escape the etiquette of palaces and to meet in private those of the opposite sex they were not supposed to meet.

The negro was gone in a flash and Casanova, after gazing approvingly at the brilliantly sensuous wall paintings, stood adjusting his ruffles before a Venetian mirror and gazed with even more approval at the virile bearing and fine features of Giacomo Casanova. Who and what would she be he wondered. Would it be best to greet her with a formal bow as a gentleman of fashion, or to fall at her feet and kiss her hand as a dazzled swain. . . ?

He swung round and his smile of seduction changed to a very wry grin as he found himself most alarmingly face to face with Baron Schaumburg. Casanova turned pale and involuntarily stepped back, but he rested his left hand lightly on the hilt of his sword and faced his enemy.

"Sit down, sir," said the ambassador, not in any hostile tone.

"Excellency," said Casanova stiffly, "since your invitation was a little informal, perhaps you will forgive if I ask first . . ."

"I used a little device to bring you here which your reputation made me think might be successful. I did it because—well, you know the suspicions surrounding an ambassador in Venice. If it offends you, pray accept my apology."

Casanova bowed and sat down.

"It is often said, Excellency," he said cheerfully, "that ambassadors are sent to lie abroad for the good of their country."

"First," said the Baron, not noticing the impertinence except by a slight frown, "I want to thank you. . . ."

"Thank *me*?" Casanova's eyebrows flew up.

"You helped to save my life and saved that of a young woman in whom I am interested. . . ."

Casanova put his lace-ruffled fingers delicately to his lips to check a little cough which meant "Your mistress?"

"Sir," said the Baron, "the lady was entrusted to my honour by her Sacred Majesty of Austria."

Casanova bowed his qualified acceptance of this explanation.

"And then that little accident opposite my house . . ." the Baron added.

The devil's in the man, thought Casanova genuinely astonished, he knows everything. . . .

"A mistake of too zealous servants," said the Baron. "That rock was intended for the head of a police spy. I regret it troubled a gentleman, and rejoice that it missed you."

"Your Excellency is too kind," Casanova murmured ironically.

"You acted with a young man's lack of wisdom," said the Baron, benevolently, but with an acid note coming into his voice. "As you did also when you bribed one of Senator Bragadin's lackeys to bribe my gondoliers for information about the lady; as you did when you offered my barber a considerable sum to pump me on the subject when you found the gondoliers knew nothing; and as you did, above all, when you attempted to gain the same end through a Jesuit friend of yours, who most properly rebuked you. . . ."

Through this tirade Casanova sat turning paler and paler, as he heard this exact account of intrigues he thought nobody knew. He hadn't a word to say.

"You should drop this sort of thing," the Baron went on patronizingly. "With the representatives of great powers, anyhow. Besides, the lady had left Venice within twenty-four hours."

The first lie he has told! Casanova thought, plucking up spirit, and he doesn't know that she sent me a message. Perhaps she is still here!

"I regret to hear it," said he aloud, "I could have wished, with your Excellency's permission of course, to send her my most respectful homage. But I must congratulate you on the efficiency of your spy system."

"It *is* efficient," said the Baron, genuinely pleased. "I am glad you recognize the fact. Ah, sir, in these corrupt days, what difficulties we gentlemen have in finding honest and faithful servants who will stick at nothing. . . . But I must not keep you. My gondola is at your service. Before you go,

however . . .” He fumbled in his pocket and produced a small box. “I advised against this,” he said looking at the box resentfully, “but those damned women can get one to promise anything.”

“I don’t understand your Excellency,” said Casanova, who nevertheless guessed at once that Henriette had found this means of communicating with him.

“The lady,” said the Baron, “thanks you and sends you this ring as a token of gratitude.”

It was a heavy ring of chased silver set with a large oval of lapis lazuli, with little value except from association. Evidently Henriette had been careful to see that the ring she sent should be valuable only because it came from her.

“I accept it gladly,” said Casanova, all his gaiety returning to him. “That is, if your Excellency assures me it comes from the lady herself.”

“Let me add to it a piece of advice,” said the Baron rather threateningly and ignoring the question. “It is that you abandon all hope of ever seeing the lady again and make no effort to find out her name, or it may cost you dearly indeed.” He paused to give effect to his threat and then pointed melodramatically to the door. “Your way lies there, sir!”

Casanova bowed and walked to the door, opened it, seemed to hesitate, then put his head back from outside.

“What is it? What do you want now?” asked the Baron testily.

“Only,” said Casanova, “that you will return my thanks for the ring and give my undying love to—*Henriette*.”

“Stop, sir, stop! Come back instantly!” shouted the Baron leaping for the door Casanova slammed in his face. But it was too late—Casanova had slipped away unseen in the darkness and without troubling the Baron’s gondoliers.

Long after midnight that night Marco and Casanova sat talking in his room. Casanova could keep a secret when he had to, but doing so irritated him as much as keeping a chestnut burr in his breeches pocket when the secret concerned a pretty woman. Several times during the evening he had

checked himself as he was about to tell Marco what had happened. At last he could bear it no longer and suddenly blurted out:

"I saw Baron von Schaumburg today."

"The devil you did!" Marco looked disturbed as well as considerably astonished. "Did you speak to him?"

"Certainly I did. He sent for me."

Marco whistled.

"And what did he have to say?"

"Oh, too much to remember. It all boiled down to threatening me if I persisted in trying to see Henriette."

"Henriette?"

"The girl we fished out of the canal," said Casanova.

"How do you know that's her name?"

"She told me so herself."

Marco looked bewildered and Casanova, immensely enjoying the situation, produced Henriette's little note which Marco read and handed back to him, saying:

"You were lucky to get out of the situation so easily. You'd do well to forget her."

"Forget!" Casanova laughed. "Do you think I'm to be frightened by the threats of a stupid Austrian? He's no rights over her. He lied when he said she had left Venice. It's a large place, but the old scoundrel can't hide her away from me for ever."

There was a pause, during which Marco fidgeted in his chair, looked undecided, and then blurted out:

"I oughtn't to tell you, but the Baron spoke the truth. Henriette has left Venice."

"How do *you* know?" Casanova flashed back at him instantly.

"My father told me." Marco hesitated and then almost whispered. "The whole affair was up before The Ten for discussion."

It was now Casanova's turn to whistle.

"The devil!" he exclaimed in a loud voice. "And since when have my love affairs become matters of State?"

"Hush, hush!" Marco glanced around as if expecting to

see the shadow of a spy in the candle-light. "Remember, every wall in Venice has ears."

"There must be something political attached to all this," said Casanova, ignoring Marco's warning. "The Three and the Ten waste no time on matters that don't concern their own power. Well, perhaps time will show . . . Where has she gone?"

"How should I know? If I did know, I wouldn't dare tell you. Forget her. Try to think it all a dream."

"A dream?" said Casanova lazily, taking the ring from his fob and turning it slowly in his fingers. "There's a tangible enough symbol that it wasn't a dream. Henriette sent me this ring today through the Baron."

"Through the Baron! You're joking!"

"Not at all. The Baron is a man of honour. He may have been surprised into giving his promise, but having given it, he kept it with the punctilio of a noble with sixteen quarterings and a wooden head . . . This is a poison ring, you observe. It opens when you press this carved strawberry leaf, I've discovered, and shows the sweet poison within. Look."

The lapis lazuli flew back on a hinge as Casanova pressed the spring and Marco saw in the hollow a tiny, delicately painted miniature of Henriette.

But then, a miniature under the stone of a ring was not Henriette, as Casanova regretfully acknowledged.

5

A PERSONAL visit from the Cardinal-Archbishop of Venice was something of an event even for a family of senatorial rank, and his Eminence was careful to hint to Senator Bragadin and his two inseparable friends that the visit was brief and would not have been made but for the menace of a scandal to the Church. . . .

"It was at your Excellency's request and contrary to my own judgment that I unwillingly allowed this young man to take orders," said the prelate.

"I had hoped . . ." Bragadin began, but the Cardinal interrupted him with a wave of the hand.

"You acted for the best," he said, "but you should have been ruled by us. We are accustomed to judge character. It is true that this young Casanova of yours is not a desperate or violent character. Indeed, I should say that he is pre-eminently unencumbered by heroism. . . ."

"In the midst of a storm, from icy water, he saved . . . I" Bragadin began again, indignantly this time.

"I know, I know." Again the wave of the hand. "It was a generous impulse. But he is not the sort of man who would die for a lost cause—indeed, I should say he is determined not to die or even put himself out for any cause. In a spasm of rage and vanity he might commit follies of a violent kind, but he is emotionally too volatile to carry deep resentment to a distant revenge. His sense of honour is easily wounded—but it has marvellous recuperative powers. . . ."

Bragadin made a gesture of dissent and looked to his two friends for support, but they steadfastly kept their eyes turned from his. He gulped down his protest, and allowed the garrulous old Cardinal to talk on.

"You seem to doubt it? But look at his proceedings with Schaumburg, who tricked him out of a mistress and threatened him. At first your Casanova was all death and damnation for the ambassador, would cut his throat—but second thoughts prompted him to discretion, the mere hope that Rhadamanthus or St. Peter—if your Signor Casanova believes in either—will eventually see him to the right place."

"Your Eminence will forgive me," said Bragadin, "but you would surely not have a young man in orders fight a duel?"

"By no means," replied the Cardinal, who was descended from one of the oldest families of Romagna, "I merely point out that he is neither a gentleman nor a cut-throat. So it is also with his too numerous love affairs. No doubt he never heard of the heathen philosopher Aristippus, but few have carried out more thoroughly the precepts of that pagan voluptuary. . . ."

The Senator and his two friends were growing weary of this discourse—had the Archbishop called to recite to them one of those character sketches so fashionable at the time or to try over a few paragraphs from his next sermon?

“May I ask what we are to deduce from all this, Eminence?” Bragadin asked.

The Archbishop smiled his wistful smile, which had in it less of charity than weariness of life.

“It is not, my illustrious friend,” he replied pompously, “that your young friend has apparently no belief in God. In these times of laxity, I grieve bitterly to say it, this has sometimes proved no bar to orders or even to rank in the Church. Nor is it even that he cultivates sins of the flesh particularly odious in one aspiring to the dignity of priesthood. He is a cause of scandal. He often goes out in secular dress, wearing a sword. When he does dress as an *abbate*, he gambles. In Lent he demands a dispensation to eat meat, which shows an incurably frivolous nature. He must leave the Church for our sake and leave Venice for his own. . . .”

Thus far the Archbishop, and, shorn of its mannerism, what he had said was reasonable and true, as even Senator Bragadin had to admit. But he was not so ready to admit the soundness of the Archbishop’s advice, though he knew quite well it was an intimation that His Eminence would not allow Casanova to become a priest. On the other hand, what was Giacomo to do if he left the Church entirely? Would it not be better to send him to Rome to complete his studies? There he would be under stricter discipline and removed from the temptations of Venice.

The upshot of long private discussions between the three Senators, who gave more of their time to the problem of Giacomo than they did to their share of the government of Venice, was one which will easily be foreseen. They decided to appeal to the guidance of Solomon’s Key, and were not a little surprised and disconcerted when that spiritual oracle utterly refused to allow Casanova to leave Venice though it was impenetrably ambiguous about the Church career. . . .

Her name was Rosaura Laurano; she was twenty-two; she

was married; and fast developing into one of those splendidly opulent beauties such as Veronese loved to paint and Lord Byron loved. Her husband—a mean little man with finicky manners and a bagwig too large for his meagre profile—was noble and heavily in debt. How did an elderly, unhealthy, penniless scarecrow manage to marry a healthy, pretty, if brainless girl with a good deal of money? The same old stupid story—he was a noble and she was not; he gave her insubstantial rank in exchange for her father's solid money.

At first it had been rather wonderful for Rosaura to live in a palace four hundred years old and be called "Excellency" and "most illustrious". But, then the palace though beautiful sadly needed repair, and the meals were unbelievably frugal after the middle-class over-eating at home, and the servants laughed at her behind her back, and then she found out that a big slice of her dowry had gone to pay the debts of an old friend of her husband's—a married lady who dyed her hair and was descended from a Doge. And then married life turned out to be very dull, for she met nobody but dried-up men who discussed politics and haughty huge-bosomed ladies who talked endlessly of pedigrees, thus reminding Rosaura that she did not have one—as if she had been born without thumbs or an appendix or something.

What made it all the more tedious, was that no *cicisbeo* had been stipulated in Rosaura's marriage contract. Now the *cicisbeo* or *cavalier' servente* was not always what the cynical, modern world supposes; i.e., a licensed lover. In an age when women could not go anywhere without a male escort, the *cicisbeo* was a necessity—a friend of the family or a poor relation who relieved husband and wife of the tedium of always going out together as well as of always being together at home. It is true that he was supposed to be platonically in love with his lady—a distant survival of the ideal love of Provence and Dante and Petrarch. This saved everybody's self-respect, and was really a proof of innocence rather than corruption. Perhaps the feigned platonic love often became real carnal love, but then . . .

Rosaura finally had to cry to her father and threaten to run

away or drown herself or go into a convent, before her pinch-lipped solemn little husband could be made to give her money and to find a desiccated cousin to take her about.

In a misguided moment this uninteresting *cicisbeo* took Rosaura to the Ridotto, where chance put her down at the *faro* table by the side of Signor Giacomo Casanova who instantly appreciated her beauty. He saw that she knew nothing about the game and, presuming on the *cameraderie* of the gambling table, he first condoled with her as she began to lose her few poor ducats, then ventured to advise, and wound up by playing as her partner.

The *cicisbeo* who perhaps ought to have done something about this had gone out to get an ice and a cup of coffee.

Meanwhile the amorist in Casanova—and few will deny that the amorist made up a considerable percentage of that fascinating adventurer—was summing up Rosaura's attractions with the method and appreciation of a connoisseur. What abundant silky hair, what slumberous blue eyes, what innocently promising lips, and—just heaven!—what a snowy throat and neck hinting of delicate hidden breasts! Casanova had been playing carelessly, indifferently, still heart-sick at the loss of Henriette. But now Fate had sent him the kind of consolation he understood, for with Casanova (and was he so unique in this?) the consolation for a love affair gone awry was a new love affair.

He began to play now with that uncanny skill and luck which had already brought him the fame of breaking the Ridotto bank, and later made him one of the most notorious professional gamblers in Europe. He won steadily, and each time he won he divided his winnings with his fascinated young partner who could scarcely believe in the piles of gold dropping into her lap, like a new Danaë. Meanwhile they talked, aloud about the game to baffle listeners, in whispers about what began to interest both almost more than the gold.

"We'll put ten ducats on that column.—*I am Giacomo Casanova, what is your name?*"

"Rosaura Laurano—I've heard a lot about you.—Bravo! You've won again!"

"We'll stay at ten ducats.—*Don't believe what you hear, I'm not as bad as they say.*"

"You've won again!"—*I heard nothing bad of you, only that you are charming and dangerous.—Shall we stop now?"*

"Stop? We're only beginning. See! the stakes are doubled.—*How is it I never saw you before?"*

"Don't be too reckless, it would be disappointing to lose now.—*I've been married only a year; are you married?"*

"Heaven forbid! I mean, since I was unlucky enough not to marry you, I don't intend ever to marry.—Ah, we win again!"

"How wonderful!—*I mean, you're making fun of me.*"

"I'm trying to make us both happy.—I'm doubling the stakes and taking a risk.—*Isn't there anywhere we can meet together?"*

"Oh, I do hope you go on winning.—*You know a woman can't go out alone.*"

"I'm raising the stakes again.—*If I promised to be everything you wanted, could you come to my casino?"*

"Fifty ducats for a single stake! You like taking risks, don't you?—*I am a respectable woman.*"

"I know. That is why I asked you. Couldn't you pretend to be going to a relative?"

"The fifty ducats wins!—*Would you promise to respect my honour? I've never been alone with a strange man.*"

"Oh, I promise anything you ask, and I shan't be a stranger long.—Now for the last throw, I'm raising the stakes again.—*Have you a servant who can be trusted?"*

"Yes, but can I trust you?"

"We win again. Pretend to count, and listen carefully. Is that your husband peering after you at the door?"

"Who? Oh, that!"

"I congratulate you—on the money you've won, of course. At eight tomorrow my gondolier will pass your palace. He will wear blue clothes, a white sash, two red roses. Put your servant at a lower window wearing a blue scarf. A letter will be thrown in."

"Three hundred ducats!—*You are a wicked man trying to seduce me.*"

"The *cicisbeo* is getting suspicious. You'd better go.—Thank

you for bringing me luck, Signora.—*I'm madly in love with you already.*"

"*Liar.* Thank you for helping me to play. Good-bye in case I don't see you again."

"*When I love a woman I always see her again.* Excellency, your most humble servant!"

Casanova watched her young graceful movements as she crossed the crowded room to the door, where the *cicisbeo* pounced on her with the malevolence of a husband without rights and a lover without hope. Ignoring him, Rosaura stopped to put on her mask, and, as she did so, made Casanova a sign with her small white hand. He bowed formally as if to the most conventional of acquaintances, and then, when she had gone, moved to another table where he pretended to watch the play.

He was a little dizzy with the violent desire Rosaura had aroused in him. Moreover, if that desire was to be gratified with anything more than a sigh and a regret, he had every need to busy himself since he had invited Rosaura to a *casino* he didn't possess and promised as a go-between a faithful gondolier who was not in his service. And there were many other services and things needed for a successful affair, since few hobbies are so expensive as love. And then there are some things that are not for sale; for instance, unquestioning fidelity in servants, which patricians had by right of birth but nobody could buy.

Casanova looked at his watch—half an hour after midnight. The night was yet young in Venice:

The pleasant place of all festivity,
The revel of the earth, the masque of Italy."

He made his way back to Ca' Bragadin, where some hour or more ago he had left Marco and the three old Senators sedately playing at tric-trac for quarter-ducats. From his room, Casanova sent a servant to Marco with this note:

"Come upstairs to me as soon as you can without saying anything. G."

He went to the window and looked over Venice. A warm breeze brought a salt tang from the lagoons mingled with fainter, richer scents from the more distant autumnal land. The stars glowed softly in the moist sky, and their glittering reflections in the water were blurred by the movement of silent passing gondolas. As always in Venice on a fine night there was the sound of distant music, and invariably—as it seemed to Casanova—the faint notes arranged themselves as the song of the laughing people.

A warmer richer scent brought him back to his own room, where the servants had put for him a great bowl of late roses. He took a red rose and softly squeezed its petals shut and put them lightly to his lips, shutting his eyes to savour the fragrance, as he thought of Rosaura's lips and the delicate lines of her throat as they passed into strong curves which vanished under the stiff gold of her brocaded dress.

"Now what is it, Giacomo? Are you in another mess?"

Casanova slowly opened his eyes, restored the rose to its cool water, and smiled.

"Not exactly. I played with a partner at the Ridotto tonight, and we won three hundred ducats each."

"Did you send for me to tell me that?"

"Of course not, my dear boy! I want to ask you a favour. I have to hire a gondola for a few weeks, and must have a trustworthy gondolier. Lend me your Zorze and . . ."

"Another woman!" There was dismay in Marco's voice. "After all we've said! After all you promised! After what the Archbishop said. . . !"

"Why should I be worried by what the Archbishop said?" asked Casanova petulantly.

"Well, you're supposed to be under his orders and discipline as long as . . ."

"Oh, let's not go over all that again. Will you lend me Zorze for a few weeks?"

"I suppose I'll have to," Marco assented grudgingly. "And only this evening they were all praising you for turning over a new leaf."

"That's exactly what I intend to do," said Casanova impudently. "A new fig leaf."

Marco shook his head slowly, like a physician who gives the patient up.

"Haven't you any sense, Giacomo? Don't you realize what will happen if you go on picking up women? You'll spend all your money, you'll get into debt, you'll have a duel with somebody over her, you'll lose your sleep and get ill, the Archbishop will find out and you'll be excommunicated or something, that'll ruin your career and break old Bragadin's heart, then you'll have nobody to defend or befriend you and you'll die on the gallows. . . ."

Casanova burst out laughing at this series of dismal prophecies.

"You don't give me much hope, do you? Ah! but you haven't seen her. What eyes, what lips, what a lovely body and dainty little empty head! Besides, she wants me, I can feel it in every fibre—what's more to the point, I want her. Now send for Zorze, like a good fellow."

Half an hour later, an unlighted gondola, stealing gently over the dark water like the shadow of itself, came noiselessly to rest under the windows of Ca' Laurano. There was a pause of silence so complete that it was not broken by the whisper of the lightest ripple nor by any word or movement from the boat. Then Casanova lifted his hand whose white lace ruffle gleamed for a moment in the darkness, and through the air fled a voluptuous, pleasing music, lovely little winged flights of melody fluttering around the heavy shutters and ancient walls like darting silver moths in the darkness. You are beautiful, my dear (the music seemed to be saying), and you know it and I know it, and I'm in love with you and you're in love with me, and I can't sleep for thinking of you any more than you can sleep for thinking of me. . . . And then, so suddenly that Casanova's nerves thrilled though he knew what was coming, the exquisite voice of a muffled figure beside him began to sing Quirini's Serenade, that loveliest late echo of Italian song:

Buona notte, cor mio.

Tu forse in grembo a morbidette piume

Sciogli le membra in diletto oblio;

Ed io qui, lasso, in lacrimoso fiume

Stemprato il cor e l'anima i' invio.

Buona notte, cor mio.

Buona notte, cor mio.

Dormi pur, dormi, e teco dorma Amore,

O de l'anima mia dolce desio;

Né turbi i tuoi riposi ombra od orrore

Di fantasma notturno. Io parto, addio.

Buona notte, cor mio.

Good night, my heart!

Silence flowed back over night and palace and canal, and the long dark gondola glided away as silently and invisibly as it had arrived.

But the serenade had been heard:

By Count Laurano who was awakened by it and who swore under his breath and wished he could slit the noses of the caterwauling dolts;

By Rosaura who had been wide awake when it began and who knew it was for her, and who lay trembling in the darkness at the thoughts it brought her;

By Rosaura's woman, Marta, who heard it half asleep and thought: "Well, here's her first lover and a wonder we haven't had a score before now so young and pretty she is and rich into the bargain and that old fool of a husband of hers and heigh-ho I wish I was in her shoes with a pretty young gentleman wanting to come to bed with me and may the holy Saints bless her and may they be happy while their love lasts for we're all a long time dead. . . ."

6

It was characteristic of Casanova that he treated the task of finding a suitable *casino* for entertaining his new lady as a pleasure rather than a task. Somewhere in the network of alleys between San Marco and the Rialto he found a man who would now be regarded as a respectable house agent but then was considered a rather suspicious character. The clink of Casanova's ducats and sequins put at his disposal the attention of the agent and the offer of at least half a dozen luxurious *casini*.

After passing a couple of very pleasant hours going from one to another of these with the agent in a gondola, and picking up as much scandalous gossip as possible about their former tenants, Casanova took the place he had made up his mind to have as soon as he heard of it. The rooms were newly decorated in fashionable rococo with here and there a touch of what then passed for Chinese exoticism. The hangings were of Genoese brocade, the furniture that elegant eighteenth-century style where all the curves are imitated from those of the female body, while the wall paintings took up themes from Pompeii treated with brilliant effects of light and shadow by a clever pupil of Piazzetta. It is to be feared that Casanova was no austere aesthete, for he was even more pleased to find that the alcove contained an expensive and luxurious bed. The agent, a man perhaps not of the strictest morality and veracity, swore that it had been specially made for the owner, a certain Signora Contessa of exquisite beauty and dissolute morals, in exact imitation—the bed, that is, not the morals—of one belonging to His Most Christian Majesty, Louis the Well-Beloved of France.

Remained the important matters of a wine cellar and a cook. Dismissing the agent with a present which made him happy for the rest of the day, Casanova made his way to the business house of a friend who was also a wine-merchant. There he spent an agreeable hour eating broiled mushrooms and cheese and tasting a variety of wines in a dark little room

abutting on a huge store of vats and barrels and bottles and magnums. Having stocked up with perhaps rather more wine than was strictly necessary for an affair of this kind, Casanova turned his attention to the crucial problem of a cook. Though not learned, Casanova had paid enough attention to the classics to know that Venus is most amiable when supported by both Ceres and Bacchus.

This chore, too, Casanova turned into amusement, interviewing cooks and being vastly entertained by their mendacious tales, their artistic pretentiousness and somewhat obvious lack of scruples in all questions of property. Without any hesitation he settled upon a Frenchman named Blaise, who impressed Casanova first by a high-domed forehead which must (he felt) shelter the brains needed for good cookery, and second by producing testimonials which showed that Blaise had for years served a former English ambassador, described enthusiastically by his late *chef de cuisine* as *un bec fin* and *un beau retrousseur de jupes*. This was all very gratifying and persuasive, but Casanova's choice was completely fixed by the following dialogue:

"Don't you speak Italian?" Casanova asked in some surprise after conducting the conversation in French.

"No, sir."

"How long have you been here?"

"Eighteen years."

"What! And in all that time you haven't even begun to learn the language?"

"Ah, sir," Blaise replied with inimitable naïveté, "of what use is it to learn the language of a people who have no *cuisine*?"

Giving Blaise a couple of sequins and telling him to prepare a light supper, Casanova took possession of his *casino*, which he intended to enliven from time to time by Rosaura's laughter and kisses. He was of course fully aware that the agent was at that very moment reporting who had hired the *casino* to one of the innumerable government spies, and he also knew that any visit of Count Laurano's wife to him would be reported to the Three. This, however, gave

him no concern since he knew that the Three did not consider adultery dangerous to the State unless involved with politics—which was certainly not the case with Rosaura though it must somehow have been with Henriette. . . .

Henriette—Casanova didn't want to think of Henriette, and of course only thought about her the more. Ah! If only it were not Rosaura, but Henriette . . . He sighed, yes, Casanova actually and sentimentally sighed; and by way of distracting his thoughts tucked up the ecclesiastical robe (which by some whim he was wearing) to compose a tender but fiery erotic sonnet to Rosaura, though while some of the fire undoubtedly was for her, most of the tenderness was . . . Casanova stopped sonneteering to take off the silver and lapis lazuli ring with its hidden miniature, and put it in his fob.

With that slight tribute to the absent love which is always wronged he returned to his task. After copying out the sonnet on a sheet of scented gold-edged paper, he enclosed it within a tender note protesting a devotion rather more eternal than the universe and asking her to come to the *casino* as soon as possible. This he gave to Marco's Zorze with precise directions how to convey it secretly to Rosaura's faithful Anzoleto—and to wait for an answer. After which, with a serene conscience, Casanova picked up that elegant poem, *La Pucelle*, by Monsieur de Voltaire, and prepared to trifle away the time until Blaise's supper should appear.

But at this moment, all unknown to him, his hitherto prosperous hand-gallop into Rosaura's heart had met a check. Zorze delivered his letter, and Anzoleto deftly handed it on to Rosaura, but the reply was delayed indefinitely, with Zorze dangling about uselessly while Rosaura alternately read and re-read sonnet and letter, and sighed, and wept a little, and brightened a little, and wished life wasn't so hard for girls. Wasn't she letting the handsome young man get her too easily? Suppose somebody found out about them? And then she might get pregnant; and then Giacomo might turn out to be faithless, and how about confessing it all to Father Gregorio. . . ?

Casanova's letter warned her not to confide in anyone, so by way of obeying this injunction Rosaura obviously scuffled the clandestine letter and sonnet into her bosom under the very eyes of Marta, the experienced maid who had listened to the serenade so philosophically.

Now, Marta had served young married ladies before, and, which was even more to the point, had been young herself and was still not so old as to be incapable of interpreting the facts of life. A serenade—a hidden letter—a few sparkling tears—these interesting facts convinced Marta that it was her duty to find out what was going on, who he was and what stage they were at. Under Marta's practised guidance Rosaura first denied nonchalantly that anything had happened; then accused Marta of being a wicked woman for supposing such a thing and she was to leave the room at once; then burst into tears, fell on Marta's neck, said she loved him, said she wished she was dead, and at last blushingly produced letter and sonnet.

Marta dried the tears and kissed her, showing an instant sympathy which her employer, Count Laurano, would have thought most amazingly perfidious.

"Anzoleto says his gondolier is waiting," said Rosaura anxiously, but Marta had no remark to make.

"It would be wrong to answer, I suppose?"

Still Marta did not answer.

"Do you think it would be wrong?"

"If your Excellency thinks so."

"Stupid!" Rosaura welcomed the occasion to work off some of her nerves by stamping at Marta. "What do *you* think?"

"I don't see anything wrong in anyone being natural," said Marta stolidly.

"Naturall! Why, Marta, isn't it a mortal sin to covet another man's wife?"

"If a handsome man and a young man and one that has money in his purse, is willing to spend it because he's in love with the prettiest and neatest and most neglected lady in Venice, isn't that natural?"

Rosaura sighed. There were several answers she could have made to that, but the moral ones she didn't want to make, and the non-moral ones she didn't dare make. Marta glanced at her from under lowered lids, and remained silent, though she had plenty more to say when the moment was ripe. Casanova had not wasted his money when he had instructed Zorze to see that the favourite waiting-woman got five ducats and plenty of promises.

"I suppose he can't help it," said poor Rosaura sighing again, as she fought a not very determined inward battle on behalf of Count Laurano's marital honour.

"I don't suppose he wanted to," retorted Marta. "A man of sense knows a fine woman when he sees her."

"They say he's a great ladies' man, and very fickle."

"They who say that would probably like to get him, but can't," said Marta.

"I can't possibly write to him," Rosaura sighed, adding, "he was so kind and generous at the Ridotto."

Marta said nothing.

"Perhaps I'd better write and tell him not to expect me and that he's to forget me."

"Um," said Marta satirically, "in your place I shouldn't dream of having a lovely time with a fine young man. I'd much rather drone on here alone, and see nobody but a parcel of old *parenti* who've forgotten what it is to be in love—if they ever knew."

Rosaura was silent for a bit and then naïvely gave herself away.

"Anyway, Laurano hangs around me so, I can't think of any excuse to be away long enough. . . ."

At this Marta sniffed.

"Next week his Excellency goes to the mainland to receive rents," she said.

"I know that as well as you," Rosaura retorted, "and I also know he always takes me with him."

"Holy San Marco have mercy on us!" exclaimed Marta, finally losing her temper. "Is that all that balks you? Say nothing until the last minute, then fall ill of the mother or

anything else and be too sick to travel, and insist on his going. . . .”

“He won’t leave me—he’s too jealous and suspicious.”

“He’s more jealous of his money. Tell him you’ll have your married sister here to sleep in your room.”

“But I should have to tell her, and get her to help me and . . .”

“Bah! You’ll be doing the same for her one of these days. Now wash away those tear-marks, and then sit down and write the gentleman a nice letter, and I’ll take it down to Anzoleto.”

For it had occurred to Marta that the handsome generous gentleman might have a handsome generous gondolier, so why shouldn’t the maid go along with the mistress?

Rosaura’s note reached Casanova as he was waiting hungrily for the “plain but perfect” little dinner promised by Blaise. The delay irritated him, and he was almost ready to send Rosaura to the devil as a cursed jilt. But, as Voltaire told the world, good food and wine are the breeders of optimism—and Blaise’s meal was as good as the excellent burgundy. Re-reading Rosaura’s letter after dinner, Casanova was struck by its sincerity, its naturalness, its shyness. And the plan for getting rid of the Count sounded plausible. Still, a week . . . !

Somehow the week passed, with interchange of notes, and discreet glances at church, but no more serenades for fear of awakening suspicion. When the day came Rosaura played her little part well, backed up as perfectly by Marta, Flaminia was sent for, and the Count did and said exactly what had been expected—for after being fretful at the delay and cursing the ways of women, he grew frightened, and had to be consoled and cajoled and hoodwinked and at last packed off to his country estates.

A week. It is a long time in a new love affair. Much can happen in a week to change a caprice into a disgust, or, what is perhaps worse, indifference. Small wonder if on both sides the week had dragged, in spite of the notes and glances and sonnets and protestations. Yet as he trifled away the

dull hours of waiting, paying unusual court to the old Senators and patiently answering their questions through Solomon's Key, or talking with Marco or drifting alone in a gondola over the silent lagoon or joking with Blaise or watching the ever changing Venetian crowd, Casanova was endlessly conscious of a thought he wanted to suppress for ever. It should have been Henriette, it should have been Henriette!

Casanova sat in a window-seat of his *casino* watching the passing gondolas as dusk fell on the evening of the rendezvous and he still sighed for Henriette while he waited for Rosaura. He would have been far less pensive about Henriette if he had known that at the very same hour Rosaura suddenly lost her nerve, and announced she would not go. The servants would know she was absent, someone would tell the Count, she would be shut up in a convent for the rest of her life, her dear father would die of grief, and so on and so on, disasters being excogitated with all the exasperating fertility of an alarmed fancy.

Here was an impasse. If Rosaura expected her sister or Marta or both to come up with either persuasions or a new plan, she was mistaken. They simply looked at each other, lifted their eyebrows and shrugged imperceptibly. After all, it wasn't their affair, they weren't going to dine and sleep with a young man they oughtn't to be dining and sleeping with, and both had taken trouble and some risk out of the goodness of their hearts to help a suffering fellow female. Finally, Flaminia delivered judgment:

"Well, since you feel that way, you'd better get well tomorrow and rejoin your husband, and I'll go back to mine, and as for the young man . . ."

Flaminia threw up her two hands and pulled down the corners of her mouth, while Marta nodded sagely.

So there was nothing for it but for Rosaura to take the full responsibility, which she had hoped to push on them, and to carry out the plan she had intended to follow ever since she had worked it out in the silent watches of the matrimonial couch. It was a good plan in its way, but too com-

plicated. She'll do better when she gets to her third or fourth, Marta reflected as she heard it. . . .

Announcement was made that the Signora Contessa was worse, and the doctor sent for in hot haste. He, being a man wise in his trade, gladly accepted the worsening of a malady which even his limited science told him was imaginary, and wrote a prescription, whereupon he received a good fee and a welcome invitation to call next day at the same time. Then the servants were told that the Signora Contessa must sleep and on no account be disturbed, while the Signora Flaminia and Marta went to the apothecary for the potion. Thereupon Marta undressed and got into Rosaura's bed; Rosaura dressed in Marta's clothes; and, after locking Marta in the bedroom, the two sisters went out into the dusk clad in mask and *bauta*. . . .

Meanwhile, Signor Casanova, recovered from his hopeless dreams of Henriette, was alternately looking at his watch, cursing the delays and mendacities of women, and trying to pacify the growing clamours of Blaise who feared for the artistic perfection of his dinner. / . . .

The two masks, leaving Ca' Laurano, strangely enough, did not make for the apothecary as announced, but for a dark unfrequented *rio* where Zorze was waiting in a gondola with the resigned patience of one who had been on this sort of errand before. There the two parted—the one dressed in Marta's clothes getting into the gondola, while the other slowly strolled home, saying prayers to save her from the terror that walks by night and the young hooligans who were apt to pounce upon unattended women and stand them forcibly on their heads to enjoy the spectacle of their humiliation.

Before Flaminia got back to Ca' Laurano the gondola with the pseudo-Marta had reached its destination; the girl in Marta's clothes had run hastily up the stairs, and, pulling off her mask, appeared in all the blushing beauty of the Countess Rosaura, was immediately seized upon, kissed, and complimented by the gratified but impatient Casanova. She looked so appetizing that for a moment he was on the point

of promising to marry her immediately after she had "made him the happiest of men".

To these children of a sunnier age there came none of the embarrassment and self-consciousness which mar such stolen enjoyments. True, neither of them considered they were acting virtuously, nor did they claim that God was approving a union man disapproved; but then they had not gone to all this trouble to torment themselves with problems of morality. . . .

They had no leisure either to ponder on an inappropriate puritanism or to enjoy its opposite. Blaise insisted on serving his dinner at once, with all the determination of a great artist who will not have his masterpieces endangered by the grosser appetites of his victims. He started them off with a soup, which on the dinner card was named: *Velouté à la Reine d'Amour* . . . Every dish Casanova saw, as he glanced over the card, had been given a new and appropriate name, though the dish itself might not be so original as Blaise pretended. But while his cooking was certainly appreciated, his long-pondered names were an even greater success. Rosaura did not know a word of French, so Casanova had to translate each in turn with appropriate illustrations. . . .

By the time that Casanova had explained the significance of "Velvet-like soup for the Queen of Love", "Nonats of Venus from the Adriatic", "Quails of a Night of Love" and "Cleopatra's saddle of lamb", and they had eaten the dishes and drunk the appropriate wines, Rosaura's eyes were bright, her cheeks rosy, and her corsage in some disorder.

Time to serve the champagne, thought Casanova.

At this point the poetically gastronomic Blaise reached new heights of artistry. The iced champagne was accompanied by smooth rounded hillocks of frozen cream each surmounted by one wild strawberry, and named "Breasts of the Fairest of Venice". Along with them came sweetmeats the size and colour of gold coins, called "Golden Rain for the lap of Danaë", and under a lacy covering was a basket of little cakes labelled "The True Wells of Love".

Casanova took the hint, and Rosaura made no resistance.

MARCO and Giacomo were sitting together at one of the windows of Casanova's apartment looking over the Grand Canal. A silence fell between them, Casanova looking out unseeingly at the rippled jade water, Marco watching his friend's face curiously and perhaps a little enviously. How was it, Marco wondered, by what strange secret of charm or perhaps mere brutal compulsion, that Giacomo could so instantly fascinate women? It is true perhaps that women are easily tempted, but then how many motives they have for resisting! Yet not with Giacomo. Women were ready to risk not only reputation and place in the world but life-long imprisonment in a convent, just to spend a few nights with him. . . .

A week, Casanova was thinking, how long is a week when you are waiting for a pretty woman, and how short a week when she is in your arms.

He looked so melancholy that Marco could not help asking a question which was not altogether well-bred.

"Were you disappointed in your Rosaura, Giacomo?"

The question roused Casanova from his reverie, and he looked surprised.

"What are you talking about? Disappointed? She was lovely! What lips and hair, what breasts and shoulders, what temperament! Why, she's such a woman as we read of in the ancients, a Delia, a Lesbia. . . ."

"Then why are you so gloomy?"

"Regret, perhaps a little remorse. She spent our last night between ecstasy and bitter tears."

"I wonder why it always seems to trouble you so much when women cry?"

Casanova looked surprised.

"I want them to be happy," he said simply.

"Well, you seem to go the wrong way about it," said Marco, hopeful perhaps of pushing home a warning. "You claim you were in love with your Rosaura—and she certainly

must have been in love with you—yet you've only made her miserable on your own admission."

"Pooh!" Casanova looked with some contempt on a man whom women did not desire. "You don't understand. She had the most unforgettable experience of her life. Even when she turns devout and believes I shall go to hell, she won't be able to resist remembering those ecstasies, and with infinite regret. She cried, not because she was disappointed, but because she wanted the impossible. She wanted to domesticate the gods, to put Venus into stays and high-heeled shoes. She wanted to make a life-long occupation of a week's honeymoon. She wanted to live for ever in a *casino* eating French meals and going to bed with me. She said I was wicked, and cried desperately when I said I should live to be a bishop. She wanted to live in the *casino* and at the same time to run away to some Protestant country—some abominable England, some foggy Holland—and be married! And then she cried until I was weary."

"I don't blame her," said Marco. "It was cruel of you to say that about being a bishop after what you'd done to her. Why don't you go abroad and marry her?"

"What!" Casanova was evidently outraged. "Abandon everything for one pair of sweet lips and a yielding body? What! The wife of a Venetian noble run away with a penniless young man in deacon's orders? Are you mad?"

"Penniless?" Marco took him up. "It's not three weeks since you broke the bank."

"A love affair carried out properly is devilishly expensive. And that fellow Blaise may have been a genius among pots and pans, but he was a sharper over his accounts. But I don't regret it. She was worth it all, and more. And yet . . ."

He was silent, and looked out of the window again.

"Yet what?" Marco prompted.

"I think I'd better go to Rome for a time."

"You do?" Marco was pleased in a way, but added: "I shall miss you. And what about Rosaura?"

"She wanted too much," said Casanova. "Even when she'd admitted it was senseless to run away. Let me see? What was

the programme? Ah, yes! I was to write her a sonnet and a letter every day and serenade her every night, and never leave the *casino*. And Zorze was to wait with his gondola day and night, and bring her to me whenever she could get away. Ah, no! There's nothing for me but Rome. The Three know about the affair, of course, and sooner or later she'd make it such an open scandal that they'd be forced to act—which would mean a convent for her, and the Leads prison for me. . . .”

Casanova was correct in assuming that the Three had been informed by their spies that the Signora Contessa Laurano had gone every night for seven nights to sleep with him in a hired *casino*—they had even managed to report Blaise's menus and their probable cost, so minute was the care of this benevolent government in overseeing its children. The Three had contented themselves by sending the reports of their spies to the Cardinal-Archbishop, for him to take any action or not, as he chose.

So it came about that exactly at the time when Marco and Casanova sat upstairs discussing Rosaura, Senator Bragadin sat below hearing about Rosaura and Giacomo from the Archbishop's emissary. This was Monsignor Lombardini, an immense man with intelligent black eyes, cheeks blue from wine and shaving, and a bulbous nose; but one much liked for the extreme amenity of his manners and his love of Latin. Evil tongues indeed reported that Monsignor Lombardini had not read his Latin Bible for years, for fear of contaminating the purity of his own compositions.

“His grace would not have troubled your Excellency again with so trifling an affair,” said the Monsignor, “had not your Excellency extended your august protection to this amiable but impudent young man. . . .”

“I am obliged to his Eminence,” Bragadin interrupted dryly, “may I ask his wishes?”

“The young man is not without talents,” said Lombardini, avoiding a direct answer, “though I regret to say”—and here a scholar's shudder went over him—“that I have heard him

misquote Virgil. Ah, Messer Bragadin, this is the age of brass! What an everlasting regret for us that we did not live in the golden age! Scholars raised to the purple by the Holy Father on account of the purity of their Latin! Sadoletus and our own countryman, Bembus—Pietro Bembo, a patrician like your Excellency and one who . . .”

“But Monsignor!” exclaimed Bragadin impatiently, “what is the point of the message from his Eminence?”

“The point, Excellency, the point . . .?” So abruptly and discourteously brought down from his hobby-horse the old scholar stammered, wide-eyed. “Where was I? What . . .”

“You had something to say about . . .”

“Ah, yes,” for once in his life Monsignor Lombardini interrupted, so annoyed was he by the Senator’s lack of interest in Sadoletus and Bembus. “Ah, yes. His Eminence feels the young man lacks vocation.”

“Casanova?”

“That is the name his grace wished me to mention to your Excellency.”

“And why does his grace think the young man has no vocation for the Church?”

It was not possible for this amiable man to blush or even to seem to others to blush, for he was far too rubicund of face when not blushing—for is it not written: “he that loveth the Muses loveth the wine-cup?” But it is certain that the blood ran to his face, as he looked round anxiously, pursed his lips, shut one eye and put a finger to a frightened nose:

“The Three, Excellency!”

“What about the Three?” asked Bragadin, not without that slight uncontrollable quiver of the belly which afflicted most Venetians when they had to mention their State Inquisitors.

“This time, they report, ’tis the wife of a noble, Excellency,” whispered the fat Latinist.

“Why should they blame the lad for that? Is it his fault if the woman is a wanton? Let the Count clap padlocks on his wife!”

"True, Excellency true. *Varium et mutabile semper* . . . But the Three. . . ."

"Pest take the . . . ! No, I don't mean that," cried Bragadin hastily. "But since when, pray, have the Three taken to avenging cuckolds?"

"Excellency, it is not that. Love is natural to every young man, *Nympharum fugientum amator*, but his grace—his Eminence, I should say—dislikes scandal."

"Why, look you now," said Bragadin peevishly, "who is making the scandal but you reverend Churchmen? Will the young woman speak of it? Will Giacomo?"

"I grant you, Excellency, I grant you. But to win money—ah! *auri sacra fames!*—the young man gambles. Suppose he does so wearing his church dress and . . ."

"You prefer he should gamble naked?" asked Bragadin fretfully.

"I beg your Excellency to hear me out—*favete linguis!*—His grace—I should say his Eminence—begs you to consider the scandal if the young man, garbed so respectably, should be found out cheating—as his Eminence has every reason to suspect he will be. . . ."

"It is a miserable libel . . ." Bragadin was beginning indignantly, but for the second time Monsignor Lombardini interrupted.

"Your pardon, Excellency, but I am commanded by his Eminence to tell you that the young man must either quit Venice immediately and not return until he has reformed and secured ordination from another prelate, or he must quit the Church for ever."

Grotesque as he was, Lombardini could speak with dignity, not to say pomp, when he spoke as the mouthpiece of ecclesiastical authority. Bragadin instantly recognized it. All he said was:

"This is final?"

"Final. And now . . ." The dignitary struggled to lift his weight of learning from his chair. "I take leave of your Excellency, with apologies for trespassing on you with a matter so miserable, so futile. Ah, Senator, the little miseries

of life, is it not they which bring us to the grave? *Pulvis et umbra sumus*. God's will be done!"

After Monsignor Lombardini had been bowed from the palace—Senator Bragadin accompanying him exactly the number of paces prescribed by etiquette for a Monsignor who was on an official message from a Cardinal-Archbishop, with the right number of bows and flowery compliments—the Senator returned to his arm-chair, took his pursy lips between the thumb and forefinger of his left hand and with that aid plunged into thought.

What was to be done?

How was this blow at Giacomo to be parried? For himself he would gladly have had "the boy" pluck off his soutane and throw it in the face of stepmother Church, adopt him as son, endow him with the estates of the Bragadins. But alas! the laws of Venice forbade. Again—and the old man sighed and pinched his pursed lips—since "the boy" must leave Venice for a while, would it not be better to ruffle it among the girls with a sword and the commission of the Most Serene Republic as a licensed cut-throat, rather than as servitor to those crow-quilled haters of the bed of Venus? Indeed it would, but what use are wits and study to a soldier, while many a bishop with no more than Casanova's gifts (but more skill in hiding) dined off plate and slept in down. . . . ?

With no answer to the question, or rather questions, revived by Monsignor Lombardini, the old man hobbled off to his two friends. They shared his perplexity. Why, it was only two weeks or so since Solomon's Key had been emphatic in refusing to allow Giacomo to leave Venice—so emphatic that in their secret chatter together the old men had agreed some great honour or fortune hung over Giacomo's head.

"These things," said Senator Bragadin gravely, "are beyond our human comprehension. We must have faith, and repose ourselves on the known wisdom of the grand hierarchy of Spirits. . . ."

As he spoke, Casanova entered the room, the first time they had seen him in over a week. The old men exchanged triumphant glances, for they took this sudden appearance as

a direct answer to their faith. All, all would be well. Yet after the first affectionate greetings, conversation seemed to lapse, as if each side were oppressed by secret thoughts. And undoubtedly they were, for on the one side nothing was said about Monsignor Lombardini and his embassy; and on the other Casanova gave not the slightest hint of all he had been talking over with Marco. Naturally Casanova had recourse to Solomon's Key, and, knowing that he was leaving the old men, was careful to please them by supplying those heavenly answers and commands which he knew they most wished to hear. . . .

"And now," said Bragadin hesitantly, "we should, I think, ask the sacred Key about Giacomo. Should he remain in the Church? Should he remain in Venice?"

Casanova, who had been wondering how he could bring the topic up, was relieved to hear this. Nevertheless, he feigned reluctance:

"But we asked only two weeks ago, and the answer was decisive. . . ."

Of course he allowed himself to be persuaded, and it says much for Casanova's powers of self-control that without a smile or tremor he watched the old men's gravity and reverence as he went through his conjuring tricks and finally produced the—for once perfectly clear—oracle:

"G. should stay in Church but leave for Rome at once."

But as Casanova knew nothing about Lombardini's visit he was somewhat puzzled and even a little annoyed by their delight in the response. It was one thing to have to leave Venice because of an over-zealous mistress, but quite another to have his best friends rejoice over it.

"How am I to go to Rome? Why must I go? My life is here, all my friends, all who are dear to me are in Venice. And how can I go without money? Must I go on foot like a Gothic pilgrim?"

Hereupon suddenly ensued one of those eighteenth-century "scenes of sensibility" which are so repugnant to our ways of expressing feelings as to seem hypocritical as well as absurd; for the old gentlemen embraced Casanova with

copious tears pouring down their plethoric cheeks, while he responded. But there was nothing really either absurd or hypocritical about it—it was simply their way of saying they were sorry to part with each other. As to the expenses of his young friend, Senator Bragadin proposed to give him two hundred ducats to take him to Rome and a little pocket money while there. . . .

Money, which is never an uninteresting topic, instantly cured them of their tears and plunged them into an animated, noisy discussion of how Casanova should travel to Rome and under whose protection he should live there. In this they were interrupted by one of the servants, who brought Casanova a letter delivered “by a gondolier who is waiting for an answer”. There was silence as Casanova glanced at the superscription whose handwriting was already only too tiresomely familiar to him. He looked up sheepishly, to find the old men also staring at the letter—Bragadin knowing who it must be from and the other two guessing that it was from a woman. All three looked away, and began another but artificial discussion, as Casanova took the letter over to the window. He read:

“Giacomo, my Giacomo, why have you betrayed me Anzoleto says you have already broken all your promises you left the shrine of our love Oh Giacomo I did not think you would do such a thing after you promised to wait day and night and Anzoleto says you have sent Blaise away that honest Frenchman who loved you too. How can you be so false have you forgotten our tears and kisses and all the dear delights. Oh Giacomo come back to me haven’t I given you what is more precious than a woman’s life my honour and what will happen to me if anybody finds out . . .”

But Casanova, out of sheer nervous impatience, could read no farther.

“Tell the gondolier there is no reply,” he said, wiping his forehead. “Tell him I’ve left Venice. . . .”

And thrust poor Rosaura's latest plea for love into his breeches pocket.

8

THE three wise men of Ca' Bragadin had decided that Casanova, as a young Levite and a naughty boy who had spent all his money, must go to Rome the cheapest way—by "water coach" to Chioggia and Padua, and thence by slow coach to Rome. Casanova would have liked to cut a dash—be taken to the mainland by two gondoliers in livery rowing a gondola showing the Bragadin arms, and then to Rome in his own travelling chaise. But as Bragadin would not pay for this modest luxury Casanova, in an access of economy, decided not to pay for it himself. Rosaura had cost a great deal—what with the *casino* and Blaise and Zorze and tips to Anzoleto and Marta, and French wines and French dinners and musicians and gifts. . . . Nevertheless, he was far from being in the penniless state he had led Marco and the others to suppose—for he had nearly ninety Venetian sequins on his person and letters of credit for three thousand ducats.

The "water coach" (actually an old barge fitted out with seats) started from Venice long before dawn. These tediously inconvenient methods of travelling of the old world started at equally inconvenient hours.

There was a cold mist over the dank canals, and Casanova shivered, though wrapped in a heavy travelling cloak, as the crowded boat began its slow journey. Dawn came, bringing the first flush of the world's colours, starting movement among the huddle of passengers—mostly small merchants and farmers who had been to Venice on business. As often happens the hour of dawn was the coldest of the whole night. Casanova pulled his cloak more closely around him, even his geniality depressed to a dull dislike of human company. Though Rosaura's unwanted persistence in a dying affair had pushed him to his present course, he was regretting that he had left Venice. The light strengthened, and he peered

about, trying to make out in the pale twilight the faces of his chance companions. . . . A shout came drifting over the water towards them, and out of the mist came Zorze racing up in his fast *sandolo* with a packet.

Giacomo gave the faithful soul a ducat and broke the seal of the package. He was so miserable at leaving Venice that, although he guessed what it was, he could not check the absurd hope that it was some kind of reprieve, some last minute recall to the city of carnival and laughter. Of course it was a letter, the last or perhaps not quite the last despairing appeal from Rosaura. He did not read it through, but sat gloomily huddled in his heavy cloak until withdrawn from his thoughts by the increasing hubbub about him.

Under the influence of sunrise over the placid lagoon, flooding sky and sea and distant land with ever-changing light and colour, the passengers had passed from torpor to animation, and were celebrating the new day with raw white wine, *polenta*, garlic sausage laid on great hunks of bread and similar delicacies. The sight of so much gusto and good humour awoke Casanova's appetite, and he explored the hamper which he had received from his friends at parting. He found in it delicacies enough to feed three men—quails in aspic, a chicken, a ham, a large pat of butter in an earthenware pot, fresh bread, fruit, little cakes, and several bottles of wine.

It was among Casanova's good qualities that in the worst misfortunes he never lost his appetite, for the foundation of all optimism is a healthy digestion regularly and pleasantly occupied. For some time Casanova ate, absorbed in the enjoyment of this very early but substantial breakfast, when he began to take note of two passengers who sat near him silent and unobtrusive. One of them was a rosy-cheeked comely woman of the people in her forties; the other a girl, who had thrown off her hooded rustic cloak as the warmth of the morning increased. The sight of her face stopped the steady movement of Casanova's jaws.

She was about seventeen, with a profile as exquisite as a Renaissance cameo, silky black hair neatly braided, a lithe

sensuous figure . . . Rosaura? The Church? A career? The advice of friends? The memory of Henriette so obstinately cherished in so tender a silence? Well, Casanova was no sailor, but there was an old Venetian folk song of the sailor which fitted him pretty well:

“L’amor del mariner no dura un ’ora,
La dove che lu el va, lu s’inamora.”

“Sailor’s love doesn’t last an hour—wherever he goes, he falls in love.” . . .

Casanova’s quick eye noted that they seemed to have brought no food with them, and as is the universal custom of Italy he courteously offered the choice of his hamper which was as courteously and customarily refused. But Casanova had been quick enough to catch a glimpse of gluttony in the aunt’s eye, and guessed that, like all young things, the girl was hungry. So he insisted on sharing and they, yielding more to his good-tempered wit than to their own hunger, consented. The food cheered them, the wine warmed their vitals and brightened their eyes, the rattle of talk made them laugh.

The girl’s name was Marietta, like the Neapolitan girl of his earlier adventure.

“Marietta!” cried Casanova brazenly. “Never before have I known a Marietta. Yet when I was born a famous astrologer predicted that my fate was bound up with a Marietta!”

If the statement wasn’t true, it ought to have been. At any rate it brought a blush to the girl, and a boisterous laugh from the aunt, who was wishing that she could drink wine like this every day.

“But aren’t you a priest?” asked the aunt, “you’re dressed as one.”

Casanova at once was ready with complex and not altogether coherent explanations—he was and he wasn’t, if they knew what he meant, anyway he was only in deacon’s orders because of his education his sainted mother had longed for him to be a bishop, and for his part he meant to make his way in the world by whatever work an honest man could do, and as

he wasn't yet bound by the fatal tonsure he might still marry if he ever found the right girl. . . .

They nodded at all this but at the last words the girl blushed again, and the aunt said it was a fine thing to be a priest yet after all priests are only men as she could tell them from her own experience. Casanova's foot somehow came in contact with the girl's, and stayed there. The aunt grew garrulous:

"We've been to Venice about the legacy to Marietta," she boasted, speaking of it as if everyone in the world must be as aware of it and as much interested in it as herself. "Think of it, two hundred gold ducats to be paid over to a girl like her, come Michaelmas! Not but that she's a good girl and a pretty girl, though it's me that says it of my own niece. An orphan, sir, but legacy or no legacy she'll want for nothing while her aunt Tina lives, bless her. Yes, sir, the legacy came from her uncle Pino—may his soul be at rest!—a tallow-chandler for thirty-eight years in the Zuecca. She's another uncle in your worship's own line of trade. Don Antonio they call him, he's the best-liked priest in Chioggia. . . ."

"Chioggia?" Casanova interrupted. "I shall be staying there a few days, perhaps longer. Do you live there?"

"Oh, no, sir, we live in Padua, but Marietta must stay a day or so for her uncle's blessing and . . ."

"Then we need not part," said Casanova gaily, "for I too have business, most important business at Chioggia. Let's drink a toast! To Marietta and her future husband!"

It was quite an idyll.

By the end of their first day in Chioggia, Casanova had managed to lodge the pair at his inn instead of their staying with Don Antonio; he had flattered and pleased Aunt Tina with just those little attentions and not too unbelievable compliments a lady of her age can accept; he had impressed Don Antonio with his knowledge of the classics and willingness to be guided in theology by a more mature mind, and by his acquaintance with Senators, Monsignori and even His Eminence; and moreover, what was the cause and reward of

all this diplomacy, he had been allowed openly to buy the girl a few little presents and had managed to kiss her in secret. . . . As Casanova fell asleep that night he had already made up his mind to marry the girl (if she was a virgin) and planned that they should spend their lives in a simple pastoral life such as is described by Theocritus and Virgil, those eminent shepherds who mostly lived at Court.

Early the next morning Casanova kissed the girl again, and acquired what seemed to him sufficient evidence she was that *rara avis*, a *virgo intacta*. Dilly-dally was never in Casanova's line, especially when pretty girls were concerned; so he immediately asked her to marry him. With misplaced humility and candour Marietta said it would be an honour for her to marry such a handsome man and such a fine gentleman, and she prayed the dear Lord and all the blessed saints she might be worthy of him. Touched by this goodness, as well he might be, the rascal made a virtue of admitting that he was not a patrician, and after romancing about how he had been defrauded of estates which had never existed he explained that after they were married they would live the pure innocent life of Arcadia.

Marietta, who had spent most of her life on a farm, had never heard of Arcadia and had no idea what or where it might be; but she was ready to live anywhere as the wife of a gentleman so handsome, so generous, so fascinating, who said such lovely things to her, and had perfume on his lace handkerchief, and kissed so beautifully and respectfully until it made a girl thrill all over, not like those clod-hopping farm boys who had only the one coarse idea about women. . . .

By noon Casanova had announced his intention of abandoning life in the Church, though without specifying precisely what he intended to do; and, having changed from ecclesiastical to lay clothes, was permitted by Marietta to consider himself betrothed. Tina was a little uncertain—it was all so sudden—and perhaps, who knows?—she may have been a little jealous. Don Antonio, however, flatly refused to give his consent—much to Marietta's indignation—until Casanova had given an account of himself and his prospects.

Pressed by the questions of the old priest who, though unworldly, was not a fool, Casanova invented so many explanations, each more ingenious than the one before, that even he had some difficulty in remembering just exactly what he was supposed to be. Among other inventions he conjured up an imaginary uncle, a notary in Brescia, who had promised his dear nephew Giacomo an estate near that town, where Casanova intended to take his bride and live in pastoral happiness. . . . And so on and so on. Yet in all this mendacious farrago there was one point on which Casanova was absolutely sincere, and that curiously enough the very one which those who knew him best would have found most difficulty in believing—he was so temporarily infatuated with the girl that he was ready to marry her, to achieve that possession which would for ever cure him of wanting to be married to her.

What really broke down the good priest's very reasonable suspicions was the arrival of a packet of letters from Casanova's friends in Venice, last minute farewells and good wishes for success and safety on his journey. How could Don Antonio suspect the good faith of one befriended by such venerable Venetian names as Bragadin, Ziani, Barbaro and Valieri?

That afternoon the couple managed to slip away from the guardians of Marietta's virtue, and went shopping. Casanova bought her such clothes and jewels as a small town like Chioggia afforded, had her dressed as a lady, and then took her to a wine garden where he enjoyed many of the delightful liberties taken by if not permitted to impatient youth in a state of betrothal. Giacomo and Marietta agreed on the names for their first three sons and daughters, which so much inspired Casanova that he vowed (and indeed almost believed) that he was practically a virgin himself, and certainly had never loved anyone as he loved Marietta. That night, when everyone was asleep, Marietta with a thousand trepidations and a too loving heart crept from her aunt's bedroom along a corridor to another bedroom where Giacomo was waiting, and she ceased to be a virgin.

The poet who said: "He who has once been happy is for

aye out of misfortune's reach" made a statement which had more boldness than truth about it. Casanova was certainly happy enough during these thoughtless hours with pretty, ignorant little Marietta, but he was by no means out of misfortune's reach, as he was to discover. But before that discovery Casanova had already experienced, not for the first time in a love affair, the melancholy truism that something of bitterness always rises from the fountain of pleasure. Scarcely had he won his way with Marietta when his critical sense began to show him how naïve and uneducated she was, how untrained in manners, how plebeian even physically. In spite of himself he could not help contrasting her—not with Rosaura, but with Henriette whose high-bred beauty was all the more haunting because he had only caught so brief a glimpse of it. Casanova was uneasily astonished to find how his emotions and actions were dominated by a woman who did indeed exist, whose name he knew, whose unconscious body he had held even, but who was still for him almost entirely a fragment of ideal beauty, a name he had given some nameless yearning for impossible felicity.

These reflections passed through Casanova's mind as he lay awake in bed after Rosaura had left him after the sixth night of their adventure. In one of those moods of candour with himself which come to the obtusest of men, let alone to one so intelligent as Casanova, he recognized that since he had known Henriette everything he had thought and done had been unconsciously determined by her. At first he had tried desperately—how desperately he alone knew—to find her, to establish some link which would give him tangible hope. Then, disappointed in his vanity because she had contrived to resist him, had vanished from his life leaving only a message and a ring, he had revenged himself in pique by his affair with Rosaura. But he saw now—how clearly—that even as he held Rosaura in his arms his longing had been for Henriette.

Henriette too had kept him in deacon's orders, though nobody now recognized better than Casanova how unfitted he was for the Church. But if he became a soldier, he was

afraid he might be sent to one of the Venetian garrisons abroad, while as a clerk in holy orders he could allege a dozen excuses for staying in Italy. Indeed his going to Rome had been agreed on only because he had a superstitious belief that it was there he was destined to find Henriette. But Marietta, why Marietta? Why the absurd dream of pastoral felicity with a peasant girl? Casanova yawned, and tried to forget about it. But it would not let itself be forgotten. Wasn't Marietta too a silly piece of pique? "You see how little I really think of you, Henriette, because I can be perfectly happy, oh, perfectly happy, with a little peasant girl. . . ."

The thought was so disquieting that Casanova rolled out of bed, washed and dressed, and then breakfasted in a small sitting-room he had hired for his own convenience, and as a place to see Marietta alone during the day. Breakfast disposed him to optimism and peace with himself, as good meals nearly always do with those of fortunate digestion. He yawned and stretched—certainly these ardent nights curtailed sleep—and went over to the window, humming to himself once more the song about "the people who have laughter in their mouths". His view was of the canal which passes through the centre of Chioggia with its wide quays on either side, as crowded with the picturesque life of the place as the water with fishing-boats and little trading vessels. Behind them rose an equally picturesque line of handsome dwellings, storehouses and shops, free of the wreckage and squalor which now afflict Chioggia.

Casanova was blind to it all. The too familiar is never the picturesque; and we take our ordinariness with us, imposing it always on what is nearest in time and space. But he was startled from the apathy of cheerful digestion by the unwelcome sight of a little group of men pushing their way through the crowd with that purposeful air of people who are bringing someone unpleasant news. The group consisted of four *sbirri*, a sort of policemen, and Don Antonio with a very red face, talking and gesticulating violently to them.

It needed no Solomon's Key or any other method of

tapping the mysterious omniscience of the occult to tell Signor Casanova that this little convoy was coming for him. Without a moment's hesitation he seized hat and cloak, made certain he had his money securely, scrambled through a back window and down a thick vine clinging to the wall, and made his way by side alleys but with remarkable speed to the open portion of the port of Chioggia.

There for two gold ducats and the promise of two more if speed were forthcoming, Casanova hired two rowers with a fast *sandolo* to take him to Venice, which voyage he made a prey to somewhat agitating thoughts in an uncomfortable position, lying at the bottom of the little boat wrapped in his cloak, and hidden under a fishing-net which smelt abominably of stale sardines. His dramatic entry late that night into Ca' Bragadin spread consternation through a tric-trac party consisting of Marco and the three old patricians. By the look on their faces Casanova perceived that in the next few days Solomon's Key would have to work hard and tactfully.

In Venice there was the deuce to pay—the situation was much worse than Casanova had feared in his most pessimistic mood. Don Antonio, it turned out, had never been anything but suspicious of this boastful young stranger who threw his money about so recklessly and insisted on marrying a girl he had known barely five minutes. Don Antonio's knowledge of men suggested to him that solid men with money honestly come by are invariably careful of it, and that a man who means marriage is seldom in such a flaring hurry to get to bed with the girl. However, Marietta and Aunt Tina had both been so much struck with the young man and had made such scenes at any suggestion of delay that Don Antonio had agreed at last to the betrothal, reluctantly against his better judgment.

However, to make up for this he had instantly consulted one of Chioggia's three attorneys, and had sent him off at once to Venice to make enquiries about this young Giacomo Casanova and his way of living. Unfortunately for Casanova the Chioggia attorney soon fell in with certain enemies still smarting from the injury of losing the favours of their young women to this plausible and universal Don Juan. Not only

were they able to show the falsehood of Casanova's tales of an uncle in Brescia with an estate, but they were able to do quite a lot in the falsehood line themselves. In fact, they so plied the scandalized attorney with accounts of Casanova's debauchery, sorcery, cheating at cards and wholesale villainy that when he poured out this mixture of truth and lies to Don Antonio, the angry uncle immediately applied for the arrest of this horrible and dangerous criminal.

Most luckily for him, Casanova's quick action had saved him from arrest in Chioggia, where, in accordance with the dim judicial procedure of the age, he might have wasted away in some damp and dismal prison cell for months before any of his friends even heard where he was; while the getting him out of such a scrape once the *sbirri* had their hands on him would have needed a lot of bribery and peremptory orders from Venice. But Casanova was not by any means out of the wood. Marietta, in resentful indignation and floods of tears confessed all, which so exasperated Don Antonio that he perseveringly discovered where Casanova had fled and instantly followed with the attorney, the warrant and the policemen.

Senator Bragadin, who though vexed by the freak had hitherto treated the whole episode as another of the dear boy's little peccadillos, looked grave when he heard this news and hurried off to his friends at the Ducal Palace. If the Three took the matter up, Casanova's fate would be unpleasant and as Don Antonio's *sbirri* were on the watch it was too risky for Casanova to try to escape from Venetian territory. Here again he was lucky. By some inconceivable oversight, Don Antonio and his lawyer had not at once denounced him to the Three, and Bragadin was able to show the Public Prosecutor how absurd were the charges brought against his young friend. The warrant was promptly quashed.

But the "Marietta troubles", as Casanova called them, sometimes cheerfully, sometimes gloomily, were by no means over. Balked in the direction of the criminal courts and the State Inquisitors, Don Antonio and his legal adviser began such a complex of civil actions involving breach of

promise of marriage, seduction, and damages for this, that and the other, that much time and money and secret influence were needed to defeat them. Casanova was so evidently in the wrong that even the Law might have recognized it. Meanwhile he lay hidden in the garrets of Ca' Bragadin, playing cards with Marco, consulting Solomon's Key, and reading Latin and French books. Even when it was thought safe for Casanova to sneak out of Venice on the way to Rome once more, Senator Bragadin was still trying to marry Marietta to one of his farmers who needed a renewal of his farm lease.

"To keep Giacomo out of mischief" Marco was sent with him to the Venetian frontier—a somewhat futile precaution since Casanova never did what Marco suggested unless he happened to want to, while Marco invariably followed however protestingly wherever Casanova led. However, Casanova made the journey in a very subdued state of mind. He had been a good deal scared by the unexpected racket he had raised by his adventure in Chioggia, and he may even have felt a twinge of regret about Marietta. At all events it was a very decorous-looking deacon who followed a porter carrying his baggage along the famous Corso at Rome towards the Palazzo Acquaviva.

There were two Acquaviva palaces in Rome, a small family mansion belonging to the Marchese Acquaviva, and a larger and more splendid one, also in the Corso, built by his more famous brother, the Cardinal. That Casanova now stood knocking at the entrance of the smaller place was a humiliating reminder of his present state of disgrace. The Acquavivas were old friends of the Bragadins but after the Chioggia scandal the Cardinal had refused to receive Casanova into his establishment. It needed all Bragadin's influence to persuade him at length to a compromise—that Casanova should live with the Marchese and be ranked officially as one of his household while working and studying in any way the Cardinal ordered. If he was of good behaviour for a year he might then be admitted officially among the followers of his Eminence. The prospect was certainly far from alluring, and

Casanova hardly knew why he had persisted. Did he really believe that in Rome he would meet Henriette?

After interviewing the Marchese, Casanova was taken to the Cardinal's residence where he was received by Father Bernadino, the librarian, a tall, scholarly man of about forty. He received Casanova with that exquisite politeness and good breeding which still mark the Roman ecclesiastic of good family, but there was a cool reserve in his manner which piqued Casanova intensely. He saw at once that the unfavourable reports about him had been at least partly believed in Rome and that much depended on making a good impression and maintaining it by careful behaviour. After a little formal talk, Casanova asked respectfully if he might see the Cardinal's famous library and collections.

A look of surprise came into Father Bernadino's face, but he at once led the way to the library—a vast room with painted ceiling and spandrels, and every wall covered with books from floor to ceiling. It overlooked a courtyard laid out with formal box hedges trained in elaborate patterns, setting off the statues and Latin inscriptions standing among them. Other ancient inscriptions and busts of emperors and poets, stood in the library, which was also renowned for its great collection of Roman coins.

Father Bernadino began showing these things with that defensive reserve experts put up against the ignorant and pushful; but Casanova, listening intelligently, put in here a remark on Imperial history, there a quotation from Virgil or Lucan, a swift reading of a difficult inscription—and the librarian's heart was won. Dropping his coldness he began to discourse eloquently of that vanished world of antiquity which was more alive to him than the people among whom he walked and breathed.

As Casanova was taking leave, Father Bernadino hesitated a moment, then laid his hand on Casanova's sleeve saying:

"Your life here may be difficult at first. You have enemies. Let me give you a word of advice—an open countenance and hidden thoughts will serve you best and carry you farthest."

The remark occurred to Casanova next day when he stood

in the presence of the Cardinal Acquaviva. Now, in Venice Casanova had known patricians and prelates; but the Venetian aristocracy of that time were ill-educated and the prelates (except the archbishop) often of humble origin. Even the Cardinal-Archbishop had never seemed to Casanova so imposing a mixture of the great gentleman by birth and a prince of the Church as Cardinal Acquaviva.

The Cardinal gave his ring to be kissed, bade him be seated and at once began asking questions. Occasionally he made a gentle comment which Casanova somehow felt was a command.

"You must get rid of your broad Venetian accent. I will see you are introduced to a respectable family of Sienese," he said. And a little later: "You have been grounded in the classics, but your knowledge of theology is very poor." And then: "Can you write Latin verse?"

Casanova prided himself on his ability to improvise hexameters and elgiacs, and quickly produced a six-line epigram containing a neat but somewhat fulsome compliment to the Cardinal, as well as the inevitable punning on the meaning of his name—"living water". The Cardinal read the lines impassively and commented:

"There was no need to flatter me. You are not yet a courtier. There is a mistake in quantity in the third line." He was silent a moment, as if pondering something and then added: "For the present you will act as an extra secretary and take charge of my correspondence in the French language." And then after another slight pause, with a winning smile: "Father Bernadino says he will be glad to see you in the library whenever you wish."

He then rang a small gold bell—the signal of dismissal—and held out his ring which Casanova dutifully kissed. The interview was over.

Most men, even if fairly thick-skinned would have been piqued by the coldness of this reception which implied clearly enough that Casanova was not wanted and that he was received merely out of deference to a powerful protector. And most men would either have withdrawn at once in

annoyance or, if more restrained, would have allowed a decent interval to elapse and would then have found some more or less valid excuse for a departure from the Church which would have been warmly facilitated. Not so Casanova. The vanity which was so strong a trait in his character made him adopt the extraordinary determination of convincing the Cardinal that he had misjudged his Venetian recruit. So, for a time, the strange sight was beheld, of a Casanova who kept regular hours, who ate frugally, never gambled, worked hard and visited only one or two highly respectable families.

This lapse into strict conventional behaviour seems more unlikely than it really was. Casanova was still young; he had been more than a little scared by the unpleasant results of his last love affair, results which might have been very serious; in spite of his success at the Ridotto tables, he had not yet taken to the life of a professional gambler and still held the cynical views he had put to his Venetian friends—namely that the Church was the only possible road to success for a poor clever man not of the aristocracy. However valid these reasons, taken separately or together, they could not long hide the fact that to undertake a life of austerity in the hope of future material rewards was sheer hypocrisy. Moreover, to continue such a course for any length of time needs a power of concentration and dissimulation which Casanova had only in sudden emergencies. His temperament was not the cold sort which can persevere in such a programme.

Obviously this perverse attempt of Casanova to deny his whole nature by becoming a docile young Levite was doomed to failure. Sooner or later he was bound to return to himself; and if this happened sooner rather than later it was due to that eternal motive in Casanova's life—a woman.

Every evening, alternately, the Cardinal and his brother the Marchese held what was called a *conversazione*, which was simply a gathering of various people for talk and companionship sustained by the inevitable coffee and ices. Much the same company gathered at both palaces—members of the Roman clergy and aristocracy, a sprinkling of artists, poets, scholars and *cognoscenti*, and sometimes one or two

distinguished foreigners. The women were mostly elderly and dressed in black, which made more conspicuous a young and beautiful woman called Donna Giulietta. What exactly was Donna Giulietta's relationship to the Acquavivas was never disclosed or discussed, but she was undoubtedly a Marchesa in her own right and invariably treated as the guest of honour.

Donna Giulietta had the south Italian oval face, heavy black hair and dark long-lashed eyes which the northern nations have taken as "typical" of Italy and the Italian beauty, though actually the racial mixtures result in several types. Normally such a woman, so different from the Venetians, would have instantly attracted Casanova's interest, but under the pressure of his newly found and precarious asceticism he almost rudely avoided Donna Giulietta and the glances of her brilliant dark eyes. Noting and resenting this lack of homage she in her turn feigned or felt the most complete indifference for the tallest, handsomest, most vivacious and perhaps in some ways most intelligent man in the whole gathering. Nevertheless, she looked at him and he looked at her, when each thought the other was occupied elsewhere.

"A handsome fellow, Casanova," said the Cardinal innocently one evening to Donna Giulietta. "How absurd he looks in a soutane—like a cavalry officer at a masquerade."

"Really, Eminence?" she answered with a cool disdain which deceived even Acquaviva, "I hadn't noticed. Does one have to notice persons of that sort?"

The Cardinal may have used the word "masquerade" because he was unconsciously thinking of the coming carnival. Just as in the last days of the Roman Republic, Cicero and other more refined Senators left Rome while the gladiator and wild beast fights were provided for the people, so at this time the clergy and the more fastidious of the upper classes (which included both Acquavivas) retired to their villas at Frascati or Albano during the popular and licentious Carnival, while many of the younger aristocrats, particularly the women, liked to stay and amuse themselves in the anonymity of mask and fanciful costume. So little does Rome

change in fact, however much it seems to change in externals.

Carnival in Rome was not well-nigh perpetual as in Venice, but strictly limited by ecclesiastical authority which would have liked to abolish it altogether, and only tolerated it because of its popularity with the people, who perhaps clung to it all the more since their rulers disliked it. At all events, Carnival burst upon Rome every year in an emotional storm which reminded astonished foreigners of the ancient Saturnalia, all the more waited for and enjoyed because of its contrast. The serious sombre city of Rome, says a contemporary foreigner, then exceeds Paris itself in sprightliness and gaiety. The main street, the Corso, was thronged with a lighthearted crowd of merry-makers, masked and in fancy dress, some on foot, some in carriages, all throwing at each other the little white sugar balls called *confetti*.

Casanova was awakened that morning by the din of shouting and songs, cat-calls, whoops and tin trumpets, and stumbled sleepily to his window. Even after Venice, the sight he saw was enough to bring him awake with a jerk. Never had he seen such variety of fantastical costumes. There were soldiers and satyrs, kings and devils, Moors and Turks; women were dressed as men, men as women; children put on long beards and aped the stiff joints of age, while old men tried, far less successfully, to frisk it as infants with bib and rattle. Ladies were dressed as peasants of the *castelli* and *campagna*, ladies of the town appeared in the unfamiliar guise of nuns and vestal virgins, the wives of shopkeepers tried to sustain the part of duchesses and princesses—all tried to appear what they never had been or had long ceased to be. Round them swarmed the ever popular characters of the *commedia dell'arte*—Tartaglia and Brighella, Scaramuccia and Columbina, Arlecchino and Pantalone, grotesque and amusing as a set of Callot's etchings.

Casanova craned from his window, open-mouthed at the spectacle. A wag in the crowd caught sight of him and shouted:

"Ohé, up there! Keep that evil eye off!"

It was a woman's voice, full of mockery and temptation.

Up till that moment Casanova had had every intention of keeping puritanically away from the crowd, but this merry, mocking voice, the laughter and the singing and the tooting horns did something to him. He shrank back from the window as sharply as if a bullet had whizzed by his head, ran to a trunk and rummaged out his Venetian mask and *bauta*, and then went down the wide stairs three at a time. At the doorway he collided with a mask dressed as a Neapolitan fish wife and nearly knocked her down.

"Hey you! Zorzel! Clumsy lout!" the mask said angrily. "Why don't you look where you're going?"

A curious little thrill went through Casanova at the sound of her voice, for even through a mask it was most clearly Donna Giulietta's. Casanova pretended not to recognize her.

"I'm sorry," he said brusquely, and with his broadest Venetian accent, "but what do you expect if you push your way into palaces?"

The fish wife laughed and dropped an ironical curtsey.

"A patrician of Venice!" she exclaimed mockingly, "I ask your pardon, most Illustrious! Pass. Pray don't let a poor fisher lass detain your Excellency!"

Where is it they say is paved with good intentions? Casanova at that moment abandoned all his laboriously fostered good intentions and resolutions, seized her hand and slipped an arm about her waist.

"Naples and Venice!" he said gaily. "We're foreigners here. Let's make carnival together."

"But I don't know you."

"You certainly do. You said I came from Venice, which I do; that my name is Zorze, which it is; you didn't add that I'm your devoted admirer, which I am."

"But you don't know me."

"Don't be too sure. But what then? Haven't you slim ankles and slender hands and bright black eyes and . . . don't let's waste time talking while life goes laughing down the street!"

Hand in hand they ran into the Corso, where instantly they were surrounded by capering masks who danced with

them, then turned and threw *confetti*, and passed on. Now somebody deafened Casanova by blowing a tremendous blast of a horn in his ear; now some enterprising but anonymous admirer tried to thrust a handful of *confetti* in Donna Giulietta's bosom; then once again they were whirled into a dance; all with the best intentions in the world.

In this way they swirled and drifted along the Corso, always keeping tight hold of each other, until they reached the great Piazza del Popolo at the northern end of the street. This great area was packed with a brightly coloured crowd of excited and noisy celebrators and Casanova had some difficulty in making a way for himself and his girl back to the Corso. They had slowly pushed, danced and *confetti-ed* their way back through the carriages and foot celebrators to a place almost opposite Palazzo Acquaviva, when suddenly they heard stentorian voices shouting to make way for the horse race, while the Papal *sbirri* drove the crowd before them and barred off the side streets.

This was one of the events most looked forward to in Carnival, since at other times of the year horse racing was not permitted. Even then, it was a curious sort of race which would hardly meet with the approval of the modern jockey and racing fan, for the race-course was the Corso itself and the horses ran by themselves. Half a dozen fast riderless horses were drawn up at the Piazza del Popolo end of the Corso and then sent clattering down the street at a mad gallop, urged on by shouting throngs at every window and side street, and by large spiked balls which hung at the horses' sides and pricked them like heavy spurs. The owner of the winning horse received a roll of scarlet cloth as a prize, but of course the real attraction was the excitement of the race and the chance of betting, above all in a town where ordinary horse racing was not allowed.

"Where shall we go?" exclaimed Donna Giulietta in alarm as a too zealous policeman felled a mask with his club. "Oh, look at that brute!"

Casanova saw his opportunity.

"This way, this way!" he said, pulling her through the

milling crowd to a side entrance of Palazzo Acquaviva. In the doorway Donna Giulietta hesitated and half drew back.

"I want to see the race," she said.

"You can't see it from the side streets—they're too crowded. We can see everything from my room."

"But somebody may be there—the servants. . . ."

"Gone to Frascati or out on the balconies. Come." He took her hand and they tiptoed up the stairs of the great palace, usually crowded with retainers and visitors, now empty and silent except for the muffled echo of Carnival. Casanova was right—the few servants remaining had gathered on the great balconies of the *piano nobile*; his own room and indeed the whole floor was deserted. Donna Giulietta looked about her with interest. It was quite a large room but very austere furnished with a low narrow bed, a primitive wash-stand, a chest of drawers, a wardrobe, and a large writing-table littered with books and papers. It seemed incredible to her that Casanova could have lived through a winter in such conditions for there was no fireplace and no means of heating the icy stone walls and tiled floor except a little charcoal brazier.

Casanova, however, had long ago learned to take such quarters with philosophical indifference and at the moment was far too much occupied with his own feelings even to notice surroundings which had grown so customary. An hour of Carnival, the touch of a woman's hand and the laughing glances of her eyes even through a mask were more than enough to shatter into dust the laboured asceticism of months of struggle. Throwing off his mask and domino, he dropped to his knees before her, covering her hands with kisses.

"What is this, sir?" Still half laughing, Donna Giulietta tried to pull her hands away from his clasp. "We came here to see the horses. . . ."

"Ah, madam, surely you know I am in love with you?"

"With me!" she exclaimed, "you don't even know who I am!"

"Do you think me a fool, Donna Giulietta, not to know your voice and your eyes even if they are under a mask, and

the movements of your body even if it is hidden in a peasant's bodice and petticoats?"

Donna Giulietta ceased trying to tug away her hands. Indeed so much interested was she in this argument that she forgot all about the race, and allowed Casanova to lead her to the only comfortable seat in the room—his bed where he immediately sat down beside her.

"Your love must be a very spindly plant," she said, keeping him at arm's length and still fencing verbally. "Can an hour or two of Carnival bring forth such a full-grown passion?"

"You're laughing at me, Donna Giulietta. You know that I've been falling in love with you since the first day I saw you."

Donna Giulietta laughed.

"You chose a strange way of showing it! Why, you always avoided me, you looked as prim as a hermit if you had to speak to me, in fact, you hardly ever looked at me."

"That isn't true," Casanova retorted, "you know I looked at you as often as I dared in that set of prying gossips. And what did you expect? You were as cold and aloof as a dead queen cut in alabaster. . . ."

"Did you really think that?" Donna Giulietta smiled. "I'm a better actress than I thought."

"Wasn't I forced to act a part," Casanova urged. "I was forced to behave like a village curate when . . ."

"Apropos, *abbate*," she interrupted, "how do you reconcile this scene with the soutane you ought to be wearing?"

"I'd throw it to the devil for a kiss from you."

"A kiss! What next, Don Giacomo?"

"Take off your mask."

"Why?"

"So that I can kiss you and then show you what comes next."

"They say you've been a libertine."

"Do you expect me to be a virgin?"

"You'll be unfaithful to me as you have to all the others."

"Ah, give me the chance to prove the contrary."

The time for argument had slipped away for the mask was

off. Casanova seized Donna Giulietta in his arms and—in his own words—“pressed upon her lovely lips, as pure as a rose, an ardent kiss which she received with the best possible grace” . . .

The moments passed in a murmur of broken words and meeting lips. The rush of clattering horses drew nearer and nearer, passed the palace with a dying thunder of iron hoofs, and rapidly died away among the frenzied shouts of the mob. The two sitting on the edge of the bed seemed not even to have heard the noise, and the race, which was Donna Giulietta's excuse for being at any rate in the room if not exactly in the position she occupied, sped by without her attempting to see it. Soon Casanova's hands grew bold, and met with only conventional resistance—the peasant's white bodice and black stays disclosed the round treasures they were supposed to hide, and the scarlet petticoat rose well above Donna Giulietta's knees. . . .

Casanova ran to the window to close the shutters to prevent any spying from upper windows on the other side of the Corso. Already the mob of boys and youths, pelting after the horses amid screams and shouts, had vanished. Carriages were parading and the battle of *confetti* had started up again. As Casanova's hand rested on the hasp of the shutter he glanced down into the street and his gaze was instantly fixed on the face of a young woman in one of the slowly moving carriages. She had taken off her mask and her male escort was helping to remove a handful of *confetti* tangled in her dark hair. She was laughing but the laughter passed into a look of surprise and pleasure as she recognized the face of the man looking down at her from the window. Casanova stared after her and could hardly believe his eyes when he saw her press her hand to her lips as if warning him to be cautious, and then, unseen by her companion, twice beckoned Casanova to follow. In a strange hoarse voice Casanova uttered one word: “Henriette!” and rushed wildly from the room, leaving half naked on his bed a beautiful woman whom in an instant he had turned from a willing mistress into a bitter enemy.

PART II

"Lom po far e die in pensar
E vega quello che li po inchiontrar."
("Man can act and speak in thought, and see what
he may meet with." i.e. Look before you leap.)
Inscription on St. Mark's, Venice.

I

WHEN Casanova at the wave of one woman's hand abandoned another woman who was already in his arms he did something original but curiously in harmony with his temperament. It was an interesting moment in his life. Of course, much of the fascination Casanova exercised over women came from the fact that he was capable of feeling strong impulses and followed them with irresistible vitality. People seemed to feel that a man who worked up such magnificent appetites was entitled to satisfy them. Those who are ready to pay almost any price for the pleasure of the moment usually get it.

One of Nature's favourite jokes, of which she never seems to weary, is to make two people throw away the possible or probable reward of months or years of labour and self-control in exchange for a few minutes ecstasy in each other's arms. But in this complex situation that point had actually been reached before Casanova looked out the window and saw Henriette. . . . People, however experienced, always imagine they can keep a love affair secret because they want to keep it secret—the triumph of wishful thinking over common sense and experience. Actually on-lookers are sometimes aware of a falling in love before the victims themselves; and, in any event, it was naïve of Giulietta and Giacomo to imagine that shrewd and highly sexed Italian servants would remain unaware of what they were doing. When they tiptoed into Casanova's bedroom together Donna Guilietta had already jeopardized her position in the Acquaviva set, while Casanova had squandered all that he had hoped to gain by months of repression.

That was the perennial folly of the sexes, lacking which humanity—organized in some ghastly phalanstery of benevolent and equalizing common sense—would be left without one gleam of the iridescent madness which makes existence tolerable. But here was Casanova going seven leagues deeper into folly at a stride, abandoning Giulietta's consenting lips and yielding knees for a wave of the hand, a mere ambiguous gesture which at most promised no more in sensual satisfaction than what he so rashly and discourteously abandoned. The man, as we say, was for a moment "out of his mind".

If that phrase means "to abandon one's self to reflex action without a moment's hesitation or restraint," then Casanova really was "out of his mind" for the few moments needed for him to dash down the flights of stairs three at a time, and to hurl himself into the crowded and noisy Corso which was only too ready to amuse itself with anyone weak enough to furnish a victim. The moment Casanova came in contact with the crowd he saw in a flash how absurd he had been—Henriette and her carriage had of course long since vanished. But it is easier to start being a fool than to stop. For, without thinking, Casanova, still following his reflex action, started to run after the carriage.

The sudden appearance of a dishevelled young man, without mask or fancy dress, instantly caught the crowd's attention. Whooping and jeering they swirled around him, pelting him with *confetti*, then with scurrilous jests. Unthinkingly Casanova showed his anger and tried to push a way through, instantly arousing mob resentment. Mud was thrown—that eloquence of the multitude—blows were rained on him, his shirt was torn, his hair snatched at. Already they were working themselves towards a lynching mood—what is a mere life if the people have a little of the fun they so richly deserve?

Luckily for him Casanova saw his danger. And luckily for him too he was a big man, in a moment of need able to exert almost incredible strength. With a suddenness which momentarily baffled his attackers Casanova abandoned his efforts to thrust his way along the Corso—where every

hard-won step merely brought him up against a heavier crush of hostile bodies—and made a swift ferocious dash at right angles, across the street in the direction where the crowd was thinnest. The mob saw his intention and amid curses, howls, roars of laughter and blows, tried to hold him; but he beat them aside with powerful arms, shoulders and savage knee kicks, and reached the corner of a narrow lane which ran at right angles to the Corso through twists and turns into a network of old mean streets. Throwing off the last pair of clinging arms, Casanova dashed into the narrow filthy lane followed by a tumultuous throng of whooping ragamuffins and healthy virile citizens out for a good time.

If they had caught him, it might have gone very hard with him, but he was on ground he had come to know completely, while most of his pursuers were away from their own part of Rome. Dodging and twisting out of their sight round angles of old palaces, through crumbling arches and malodorous courts and stables, he finally got away from them, and took refuge through a dark courtyard in the entry of a cavernous wineshop. Hidden behind the wineshop door Casanova stood panting and listening to the rush and scuffle of feet dying away amid disappointed yells and bloody threats.

When the last echo of this murderous pursuit had faded away Casanova was able to relax and look about him. He was at the entrance to a great barrel-vaulted room as huge and bare and nearly as dirty as a modern railroad tunnel—though the hoary walls had once been bright with fresco paintings. In the semi-darkness at the far end of the tunnel a wood fire smouldered on a raised brick platform among huge iron pots, frying pans and spits. In an alcove and along one wall were huge jars and pitch-smeared pig-skins of wine, while the main part of the room was broken up into compartments by rough wooden partitions, in the way still seen in some English taverns.

This scene, so curious and picturesque to modern eyes, was dulled to insignificance for Casanova by the fatal mist of familiarity. What was occupying him at that moment was the realization that his clothes were torn and muddy, that he had

left his hat and coat at Palazzo Acquaviva, that blood was flowing from a stone blow on his head and from various scratches made by savage fingernails on different parts of his person.

"Ercole!" he shouted, filling the cavernous kitchen with the rolling echoes of his deep voice. "Ercole! Atalanta! I am I, Casanova!"

There was a scuffling noise from the yard.

"Go away!" growled a husky male voice.

"No drunken brawling here!" screeched a shrew's high scold.

Casanova burst out laughing as two tousled shocks of hair over anxious rather dirty faces peered into the kitchen from some squalid nook dignified by the name of bedroom.

"What!" exclaimed Casanova, laughing, and going towards them with outstretched hands, "d'you forget friends in a day?"

"Casanova!"

Casanova had picked out this obscure tavern as a place of refuge from the restrictions and grandeurs of Palazzo Acquaviva; and his good humour, his jokes, his anecdotes, his bustling vitality had soon won him the unquestioning devotion of the tavern keeper and his wife. Now the smoky little *trattoria* proved a refuge in need from another sort of threat to his existence.

"Why are you in shirt sleeves?" they clamoured.

"You've lost your wig! Holy Saints, you're scratched and bleeding!"

And so on and so forth, with that peculiarly uninteresting volubility of such people in the presence of what is unexpected Casanova quieted their curiosity with some truths and a great deal of fiction; and they busied themselves in helping him wash off the mud and blood, while sewing up the worst tears in his clothes. It struck Casanova as amusing that in this little misfortune he should be helped in his need by Hercules and Atalanta, but by this time he had grown accustomed to the Roman habit of giving their children magnificent names recalling their imperial past.

As soon as he was cleaned, brushed, and mended, Casanova asked for food and wine, and sent Sor Ercole for writing materials. In spite of the unpromising appearance of the *trattoria* Atalanta was able to set the table in one of the wooden compartments with a meal of hot soup, cold chicken and bread, dried raisins, and the white wine called *trebbiano*. It was a favourite idea of Casanova at that period of his life that most misfortunes can be mended or at least forgotten over a hearty meal. But as he ate with his usual appetite even he was forced to admit that he was in an awkward scrape. With one dash at the wave of a girl's hand he had run himself out of a mistress, a patron, a home, a career and most of his money and clothes—the last of which were still in his bedroom at Palazzo Acquaviva. Casanova knew his ladies well enough to know that after his insult to Donna Giulietta to go back to the *palazzo* would inevitably cost him a savage cudgelling from lackeys and perhaps his life. Indeed, considering the ease with which ruffians could be hired to assassinate almost anybody Casanova realized that he was in almost constant danger of his life as long as he remained on Roman territory. And perhaps beyond the frontiers of His Holiness too, Casanova thought grimly.

The immediate problem was to recover his property from Palazzo Acquaviva before the Marchese and the Cardinal returned from Frascati. He knew only one person in Rome still not an enemy and with enough prestige to enter the palace unchallenged even by Donna Giulietta; and that was Father Bernadino. Casanova had been thinking of him when he asked for pen and ink and paper. The problem of just how to approach him was what worried Casanova, how to confess his approximate situation and ask for help without flagrant humbug on the one side or too bluff a cynicism on the other.

After a good deal of thought, of pishing and pshawing and spoiling paper, Casanova produced the following letter:

“REVEREND FATHER,

Something has happened, of which you will hear only

what he judged to be sufficient time to whet the "greenhorn's" appetite for gain, the sharper changed his tactics, expecting that in a few hands he would win back what he had lost and then be ready to strip Casanova down to his last ducat. To the man's evident perplexity and annoyance, he did not win; and the expression of surprise and concern on his face was so ludicrous that Casanova had great difficulty in hiding his laughter.

Evidently the sharper sensed Casanova's amusement, for in the next hand he attempted an obvious cheat. With many apologies, mingling the courtesy of his supposed high birth with the naïveté of a beginner, Casanova politely pointed out the "error"; and the sharper was not only forced to admit his "mistake", but to pay a rather high stake he had put on a hand he had fully intended to win. Somewhat disconcerted by this and anxious to get away quickly with the "greenhorn's" money, the stranger now began to stake high, to play recklessly and to use all the cheats he had learned to practise. He was stupefied to discover that every piece of reckless play was instantly exploited by his opponent, every trick and cheat called to his attention as an "error" so politely that he had to acquiesce—until, what was worst of all, he speedily lost over a hundred ducats.

When his last piece had gone, the sharper dealt again, and taking advantage (as he hoped) of Casanova's absorption in the cards, suddenly leaped up and tried to stab him with a long dagger. Casanova, who had watched many a fleecing scene in his time, was ready for him. Seizing the man's arm in his tremendously powerful grasp, Casanova easily wrenched the dagger from him, and in a flash had him by the throat. With a shake which would have done credit to the proverbial terrier with his rat, Casanova threw the man out of the wooden booth, and stood calling to him to be gone as he valued his life, while Atalanta peered at them from the smoky end of her kitchen.

"Lifel!" said the wretched man bitterly, as he staggered to his feet, "what life is there for me?" You've taken every ducat I have from me!"

"Herel" Casanova contemptuously tossed him some gold pieces. "Now get out, before I twist your neck!"

Turning to the door as he spoke, Casanova was dashed to find himself looking into the face of Father Bernadino, who could hardly have seemed sterner or more disapproving. Casanova braced himself for a reproof, as the gambler scuttled through the entrance enriching Casanova with all the most unsavoury descriptions his fertile and practised fancy could compass. Father Bernadino, however, made no comment on the situation—although from the scrap of talk he had unintentionally overheard he must naturally have supposed that Giacomo had added to his other enormities that of fleecing a poor man at cards. Bidding Sor Ercole hand over his bundles to Casanova and waving aside his obsequious offers of food and drink, Father Bernadino sat down opposite Casanova and looked at him in silence, with an almost whimsical expression of exasperation, regret and pity, much as one would look at a healthy, attractive but very naughty child.

Casanova didn't much like the look on Father Bernadino's face, and was taken aback by his unexpected arrival. He had meant to exploit the librarian's interest in him to get possession of his property, and had never for a moment thought that the priest might feel he had a moral duty to rebuke the erring one—indeed spiritual officiousness was repugnant to the spirit of the age.

At last, when the silence between them had grown more than a little awkward Father Bernadino produced a leather bag, which he half opened showing it filled with gold coins and letters of credit—the still substantial remains of the Ridotto winnings.

"You'd better count them," said Father Bernadino coldly.

"What need, since you bring them?" Casanova began stowing away the gold and folded paper, and then made himself a little less of a scarecrow by changing into other though worn clothes. There was another silence as Casanova changed, and he greatly hoped Father Bernadino would go away—to which end Casanova kept thanking him continually.

But Father Bernadino merely waved the thanks aside, and sat on obstinately; until there was nothing for Casanova to do but to return to his seat.

"I regret that you troubled to bring these trifles yourself," Casanova said, for about the tenth time, but with a touch of impatience which showed his wish to get rid of the too courteous helper. Father Bernadino refused to take the hint.

"I wish I understood you," he said reflectively. "You're a mixture of contradictions."

"Isn't everybody?"

"What I fail to understand is how you had the impudence to force yourself on the Church."

"Undoubtedly I should have had a wealthy and powerful mother devoted to my interests," said Casanova coolly. "That is the true charity which hides a multitude of sins, isn't it? By the by, have you seen Donna Giulietta?"

"Yes."

"Ah! And she has already sent her version to the *Acquavivas*? Of course? She loses no time, that young woman!"

"What induced you to such dangerous folly?"

Casanova smiled. "The woman tempted me, and I . . ."

"I don't believe it," Father Bernadino retorted stiffly, "and even if it were so, your duty was to resist temptation. . . ."

"In imitation of my superiors?" Casanova sneered, looking the priest in the eye so steadily and meaningly that it was Bernadino who flushed and looked away.

"It is not for you to criticize benefactors and superiors."

The remark, casual and conventional as it was, stabbed Casanova in a sensitive place—his sense of social inferiority.

"No!" he exclaimed with a concentrated energy which made Father Bernadino instinctively draw back. "No, not for me! It is for *them* to criticize me, call me blackguard and scoundrel and impudent whoremaster for wanting to do frankly and at great risk what they do in sneaking and secrecy and with impunity! If I were what you so evidently think I am, I should be pleasantly in bed with Donna Giulietta at this moment, instead of sitting here in peril of my life while she plays the part of Potiphar's wife to her

'protectors'. You would have to be capable of wanting a woman to know why I did what I did. . . ."

He broke off abruptly, seeing the look on Father Bernadino's face. Evidently he believed Donna Giulietta's version, which Casanova could guess pretty accurately without being told of it—some ingenious version of the theme that he had taken advantage of everybody's absence to attempt her virtue and had been driven from the palace by a combination of chaste indignation and lackeys. Casanova meditated the situation with a slightly grim bitterness foreign to his usual lighthearted acceptance of life. . . .

"What do you intend to do?" Father Bernadino's voice interrupted his thoughts sharply. Casanova looked up, shrugged but said nothing. Father Bernadino went on rather awkwardly: "You must—I mean, I think I should warn you not to linger in Rome. The disapproval of certain powerful interests . . ."

"Not to mention the revenge of a woman in a rage," Casanova put in cynically. "Yes. I shall leave Rome, but . . ."

"But?"

"At my own time and convenience," Casanova added coldly.

Father Bernadino flushed at this pointed hint to mind his own business, and stood up to go. But something, some feeling of a duty left undischarged no doubt, made him reluctant to leave without a last appeal to this unruly and errant sheep of the flock.

"I won't ask where you'll go," he said hesitantly, keeping his eyes lowered, "nor how you will live, though I wish I could persuade you to abandon your method of getting money." He seemed to grow emboldened, and looked up. "I heard it of you, but did not believe it until I saw and heard for myself. The cry of despair, the look on the face of that poor wretch who fled from here, are still with me. Ah, Giacomo, Giacomo, if only you would consent to abandon gambling, to give up the practice of that dishonourable . . ."

"Dishonourable!" exclaimed Casanova, facing him bright-eyed, "let me tell you, sir, that a gambler's debts are debts of

honour! You tell me gambling is dishonourable, you reproach me for making money by it. Let me ask you—is it less honourable than the methods of the banker and usurer, who lives on the necessities of others and lends at interest protected by the law? Is it less honourable than the merchant gambling in foreign goods with the ocean as his card table and ships as stakes? A gambler at cards takes his risks, but the quacks called doctors gamble in perfect safety—let the patient recover and it is all due to the doctor's genius; let him die, then 'tis the will of God. What does the lawyer sell but the chance of gambling other men's gold or freedom or happiness at the whim of an old, silly, corrupt judge? And you, sir! What do they of your profession sell but the hopes of a Heaven you never saw in a hereafter nobody can prove or disprove—a costlier and more reckless gamble than any. . . .”

“Enough, sir!” Father Bernadino's eyes were hard with angry resentment. “Let me hear no more, and let me advise you to keep a closer rein on your tongue. You have said enough in the past few minutes to have yourself put out of the reach of all possibility of gambling for a very long time. More than ever—since my duty forces me to report in the proper quarters what you have just said—more than ever I advise you to leave the Papal States very quickly. Adieu.”

2

It was no great cynicism in Casanova but rather experience of life which made him feel that losing a friend is not necessarily a misfortune—it may even be a benefit, the regaining of pledged assets of affection. But he did not for a moment try to hide from himself that Father Bernadino's departure left him feeling a little blank—it is always depressing to see a good man caught in the web of moral stupidities.

Casanova dropped back into his seat, feeling a weight of lassitude on his broad shoulders. It had been a day of exertions

and excitements, and the crowd had been a little rough in their big-hearted way, while the menace of retaliations from the Church and Donna Giuletta—both so much offended by Casanova in their different ways—was not exactly cheering. The defection of the learned and pious librarian completed the lesson and reinforced the lassitude. Casanova slumped by the table, absently twiddling the stem of an empty wine-glass and thinking. Leave Rome? Well, he supposed he'd have to get out of the city before the gates closed for the night, and at any rate make a start. But for where?

The question was allowed to drop idly while Casanova filled and drank a glass of wine. He was in that mood of wilful melancholy when a man is ready to visit upon himself the resentment he feels against others. He was more than inclined to stay where he was—let himself be assassinated by the Acquaviva cut-throats or, better still, arrested by the outraged authorities. A glance at his shabby clothes and the knowledge that his wig didn't fit him were not reassuring—he might consider this casual change equivalent to a separation from the Church, but those responsible for its discipline would think otherwise. The reflection, added to the stimulus of the wine, gave him enough energy at least to settle on his line of flight . . . Naples. Perhaps his friends there had not forgotten him, and the police had. In any case to fly to Naples from the wrath of Rome was an excellent introduction or re-introduction, there being a most justifiable dislike between the two Courts. . . .

At this point in his mental ramblings Casanova felt a tug at his sleeve, and looking round saw an extraordinarily squalid old woman. Like many ruffians Casanova was often compassionate to individual cases of poverty and suffering, while feeling complete contempt for all abstract schemes or plots for abolishing poverty. He was fishing in his pocket for a coin to give the old bird, when a sharper tug at his sleeve made him look more closely. The crone held out a letter to him, and this surprised him less than the realization slowly dawning on his surprised sense that this excessively dirty ragged old woman had young, plump and pretty hands,

that the eyes under her bushy grey eyebrows were merry and bright for an old trot sliding into the grave, and that the dirty white hair under her cap was not hair but cotton. . . .

"Your disguise is good," said Casanova, "but I've no *confetti* and I'm sick of Carnival. . . ."

A look of alarm came into the crone's eyes. Throwing the letter on the table, and eluding Casanova's sudden grab at her with an agility unique in one apparently over seventy, she hauled up her skirts and sprinted for the door, showing very pretty ankles and calves as she ran. Before Casanova could get up from the table, out of his booth, and to the door, she had disappeared.

Returning to the table he picked up the letter, which was written on good paper, though marked with the dirty fingerprints of the disguised messenger—but as the insult of finger-printing had not been imposed or indeed invented at that time, Casanova remained unconscious of the clue he held. Tearing open the envelope, he read:

"Florence. 30th. H."

The effect of this brief and somewhat enigmatic message on Casanova was instantaneous and remarkable. He danced round the old tavern, picked up the wine-flask, found it nearly empty, dashed it to pieces on the floor, and simultaneously clapped his hands for Sor Ercole and shouted for another flask. . . . The messenger he knew was not Henriette, but he was sure it was someone who knew her; and he interpreted the message as meaning that he should be in the city of Florence on the 30th of the month—and as it was only the 17th he had plenty of time.

Ercole came stumbling in with the new wine-flask, not a little astonished at the sudden change in Casanova's mood, and as Casanova began questioning him, the man's eyes widened though he answered promptly:

"I want someone to fit me with better clothes than these—do you know anyone?"

"Yes, sir."

"Send for him at once—and, Ercole . . ."

"Signore?"

"Can you undertake to send off a letter to Venice for me at once?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good. And Ercole . . ."

"Signore?"

"I want to start immediately for Florence. Buy me a travelling carriage, reserve the best horses . . ."

"That will cost money, Signor Giacomo. . . ."

For answer Casanova pulled out Father Bernadino's leather bag of gold pieces, which he rang loudly and insolently on the table. Ercole showed his yellow broken fangs in a grin of sympathetic cupidity, and hurried off on his errands. While awaiting the clothes dealer Casanova sat down with the utmost tranquillity to write a letter to Senator Bragadin. Solomon's Key, not to mention other contingencies forced "your loving and faithful Giacomo" to leave Rome immediately for Florence, "where extraordinary fortune awaits me", and so with many equally cogent arguments and agreeable flatteries for all in Venice "the Spirits commanded" and "your loving Giacomo implored" Senator Bragadin to send as much money as he could spare instantly to Casanova in care of a bank in Florence.

Thus it came about that the more or less illustrious Giacomo Casanova, who had been dallying with the idea of departing by night from Rome by the Porta San Giovanni, actually left the city at four o'clock of a sunny afternoon by way of the Porta del Popolo—by the Via Flaminia running north and not by the Via Appia running south. The travelling carriage was old, but solid and serviceable, and resisted sturdily the manifold jerks and lurches of the road. And then the postillion cracked his whip so cheerfully, abused the horses so fraternally, and the hoofs of the horses clop-clopped such a merry tune that Casanova shared the mood he himself put into them. He looked with admiration on the gold of new buttons and the lace of his sleeve ruffles. Freedom of the road after the repressed monotonous life in Rome, gay

costume after the deacon's crow feathers, made Casanova feel a gentleman once more—and what could be said more truly of Casanova than that he wished to enjoy all the privileges of a gentleman without incurring any of his restraints and responsibilities?

Casanova, then, was in a cheerful mood as he rattled northwards, and saw the dome of St. Peter's shrinking in apparent size each time he looked back across the vast desolate Campagna. But—there is always the but, always the something disagreeable rising from the fount of pleasure. As he thought of Henriette and Giulietta, which he did very frequently, he could not put out of his head an absurd and humiliating comparison—Aesop's fable of the dog which dropped the real piece of meat in the river to snap at the enlarged reflection. "Beauty is a promise of happiness", yes! But pleasure lies in realization, not in promises. Moreover, that instinct of self-preservation, so well developed in him, kept urging him to get out of Papal territory as quickly as possible, away from the influence of Donna Giulietta and the Acquavivas and the grim-faced Roman *sbirri* who had absolutely no sympathy for a lover hastening to a rendezvous. Out of this real enough danger Casanova found the best of excuses for his own impatience to reach Florence. It never occurred to him that Henriette's note might have meant he was not to be at Florence until the thirtieth, though it did occur to him that her extremely laconic notes were as ambiguous as oracles.

Just before dawn Casanova reached the last posting inn before the road entered the territory of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. After a night of uneasy dozing and sudden awakenings to pay for a new relay of horses, of jolts and bumps and hopes and fears, Casanova (characteristically) was more hungry than weary. The question was whether to consult prudence and avoid the possible vengeance of Donna Giulietta by breakfasting in Tuscany, or to have breakfast here and now, and risk the assassins?

It was certainly Casanova all over to put appetite before prudence, and to prefer an immediate breakfast to a greater

degree of personal safety. But, as not infrequently happened to him, Casanova was soon regretting his thoughtless decision. The landlord was surly and dilatory, and breakfast when it came seemed to Casanova's disappointment one of the worst he had ever tasted. In vain, he turned his famous charm on the grumpy landlord, who proved to be quite immune to it, and not to be cajoled into producing either common courtesy or decent food. He had clearly a hate-at-first-sight feeling towards Casanova, and muttered something to the effect that if the guest didn't like what was provided he could pay and get out.

"Hey, not so fast!" Casanova was getting annoyed by the man's insolence. "Before I pay I must be . . ."

He never finished that sentence for at that moment a most infernal racket began on the upper floor, with thumpings of feet, crashings of furniture, slammings of doors, to the sinister accompaniment of sword clashings, and loud Italian swearings dominated by a deeper voice cursing in Latin, Hungarian and German.

"What's this devilish din?" Casanova shouted, tugging the elbow of the sullen host who was staring up at the second floor.

"Police. Arresting a Hungarian."

"What for?"

"How should I know?" The man shrugged. "Police have the right to go into any inn bedroom to see if a man's sleeping with a woman. . . ."

"What? You allow vile policemen to break into gentlemen's bedrooms on such a pretext? The devil take such prudery!"

Sword in hand, Casanova went up the stairs three at a time to the landing, where a curious spectacle met his eyes. Naked except for his shirt, a long-whiskered Hungarian with a great sabre scar across his face was defending himself from the attack of four men in the uniform of Papal policemen. But what struck Casanova and stayed in his memory was the curious fact that in their excitement these Roman policemen were swearing *in Venetian dialect*. At that moment,

however, he had no leisure for the problem—seeing the Hungarian was hard pressed he immediately rushed to his rescue.

It was a pretty fight. The police were pressing the Hungarian hard, and he was bleeding from at least three slight but painful sword cuts. The unexpected reinforcement of a tall swordsman, who looked perhaps more formidable than he really was, put new heart into the hard-pressed minority and correspondingly dismayed the attackers. At his first rush Casanova was lucky enough to disarm one of the men, and to wound another by a somewhat wild swash in the leg. The Hungarian instantly took advantage of this temporary panic in his adversaries, pinked one of them neatly in the shoulder, and, aided by Casanova's strength, fairly quoited all four down the back stairs amid a terrific fracas of bumping heads, heels and rumps, broken swords, twisted scabbards, and a tumult of profane objurgations of Saints and aspersions on everyone's nearest female relatives.

"Domine!" said the Hungarian in dog Latin, wiping the sweat and blood from his face on his shirt sleeve, "*Ago tibi gratias. Homo es!*"

"*Sic spero,*" Casanova replied laughing, and then added—let us put it in English, "how the devil comes it you don't speak Italian?"

"Sir," said the officer very seriously, "in my country we speak Hungarian among ourselves and Latin to our menials. We have to learn a little German to make ourselves understood by those damned Austrians. I myself am in the service of Her Sacred Majesty the Empress of Austria."

This speech, which was spoken spasmodically since both were out of breath from their fight, tickled Casanova's fancy. He at once began to like this eccentric who in the same sentence damned the Austrians and pledged allegiance to their ruler.

"What was the reason for this attack on you?" was Casanova's next and most natural question.

"How should I know?" The Hungarian shrugged his shoulders indifferently. "It is true I am carrying despatches

for her Imperial Majesty, but they were actually, I think, after my comrade." The Hungarian stopped abruptly, and struck his forehead as a man does when he recollects something urgent which had escaped his memory. "And that reminds me—I must cut his throat at once."

"Cut his throat!" exclaimed Casanova, torn between consternation and an acute sense of the ridiculousness of the remark. "What! After you've just saved his life from assassins? What sense does that make?"

"Sir," said the Hungarian, "I assume you are a gentleman from your clothes and from the fact that you came to help me against those pestilential *canaille*, but you cannot be a soldier and must be unacquainted with the code of honour among those wearing the uniform of Her Majesty. No matter, you fought well against the *canaille*. . . . As for that young ruffian skulking in his bedroom—he has disgraced his uniform by not coming to my aid the moment he heard the noise of fighting. He must therefore fight with me."

"Perhaps he was fast asleep and didn't hear," Casanova suggested, not very hopefully.

"What nonsense is this?" cried the Hungarian. "Of course he heard. Let us tell you, I've suspected him ever since I was given the singular task of escorting him to Tuscany. He speaks nothing but French, which shows he is no loyal subject of the Empress, and I have never set eyes on a youth so effeminate. However, that's no reason why I shouldn't cut his throat."

Casanova was immensely taken with this eccentric soldier with his absurd code of honour—he wanted to see more of him; but cutting the young man's throat would surely involve the Hungarian in legal difficulties. As he started down the passage, with the evident intention of carrying out his threat, Casanova ventured to pluck him by the arm, and, gracefully recalling the little service he had just performed, tried to intercede.

"He must be young from what you say," Casanova urged. "Probably just separated from his mother and sisters, and no doubt shy. . . ."

"He's the most damnably impudent young fellow I've ever met," the Hungarian interrupted hotly. "Sir, he refused point blank to share my bed, as a good comrade should, and absolutely insisted on a room of his own, the damned luxurious cub! In my regiment, sir, we often sleep ten in a bed, all dead drunk, as befits officers and gentlemen."

"No doubt, no doubt—an excellent custom," said Casanova soothingly. "But you don't want to fight him in your night-shirt, do you? Let me talk to him, while you dress. Perhaps some apology . . ."

"No apology is acceptable," the Hungarian answered haughtily. "But you're quite right. This early morning air is devilish sharp round naked legs. I'll dress, and invite you to breakfast with me after I've dealt with . . ."

And he waved his hand contemptuously at the door, behind which Casanova could imagine the frightened young officer was hiding. After making sure that this was the right door and seeing the Hungarian safely in his own room, Casanova began knocking, but received no reply. In accordance with police regulations, framed to prevent unlicensed entertainment in bedrooms, there were no locks on the doors in this hotel. As he received no reply, Casanova ventured to try the door, only to encounter unexpected resistance. Reconnaissance through the keyhole convinced him that it was merely furniture piled against the door. A strong heave from his broad shoulder toppled it to the floor with a crash, Casanova tumbled into the room as the resistance abruptly ceased, there was a sort of screech from the young man, who was in bed, and who promptly dived under the bedclothes—from which emerged a muffled voice urging the intruder in no uncertain terms to "go away" in French, broken Italian and what sounded like an attempt at Latin.

Casanova put a chair against the door, to make some slight delay for the impatient Hungarian in case he should come storming in for blood, and then went over to the bed. Remembering what he heard of the young man's language, he spoke in French and as soothingly as possible:

"Sir, I come to you as a friend—to smooth out a difficulty.

How can you have been such a poltroon as to allow a brother officer to fight alone? There must be some explanation. Tell it to me, and I'll do my best to appease him—for he swears he'll cut your throat!"

There was no answer, only a convulsive movement of the figure hidden in the bed which looked very much like the attempt of a panic-stricken dastard to pull the clothes still closer about him. Even Casanova, who had no love of swaggerers, was exasperated by this excess of cowardice in a professional soldier, a cowardice which no considerations of youth and inexperience could excuse. Indignantly he seized the bedclothes in both his strong hands, and with a sudden powerful jerk and sweep tugged them almost to the end of the bed. . . .

What he had so unceremoniously uncovered was the naked body of a young woman, and even a specialist in these matters like Casanova would have admitted that he seldom saw one more attractive. But, oddly enough in a rake of his calibre, he was not engaged in quick appraisal of firm breasts, slender arms, rounded thighs and delicate body picked out with the neat dark triangle—he was looking at the girl's face. Under a tangle of glossy curls the face, with all its expression of different emotions, was the face of Henriette. . . .

If Casanova did not feel a fool he certainly looked one as he stared idiotically at his still mysterious beloved, revealed in so unexpected and unceremonious a manner. If he had any thought beyond that of almost overwhelming astonishment and disorientation, it was the absurd one that seldom before in the long and diverse history of lovers had a man held his mistress unconscious in his arms and seen her naked before ever speaking to her. . . . Luckily for him, women are seldom offended when a man makes a fool of himself for the sake of their sex; but Casanova was still gaping at her nakedness, like a yokel at a village fair, when Henriette recovered from her surprise, snatched the bedclothes round her, and asked him how he dared commit the outrage of entering her bedroom and pulling off her bedclothes?

Obviously, there were a number of possible retorts to this

not wholly sincere question . . . For instance, she knew quite well that he had come into the bedroom believing it to be a man's. And then he might easily have retorted that he had not come into the room to see her naked but to save her life from the irascible Hungarian. But all that he found to say was:

"You're . . . you're . . . Henriette!"

"Does that give you right to break into my bedroom?"

"I . . . don't you recognize me?" Casanova pleaded, thrown quite off his usual impudent aplomb. "I am Giacomo Casanova. . . ."

"Casanova?" said Henriette with innocent-seeming malice. "I've heard the name. Aren't you the young man who had to leave Venice on account of a certain nobleman's wife, and . . ."

"You are quite mistaken," Casanova retorted, though he wondered how on earth she could be informed so accurately. "I am that Casanova who met you in the waters of the Grand Canal, and whom you beckoned to yesterday in Rome. Here I am at your service!"

"Now that we are introduced, the first service I ask of you, sir, is to leave my bedroom so that I can get up. To that I add . . . I trust your self-interest as well as your honour to keep the secret that my sex doesn't answer the uniform I shall wear."

Casanova struck his forehead as a weighty matter he had forgotten was brought sharply to his memory.

"Heavens!" he exclaimed, "I had quite forgot the reason why I forced my way into your bedroom. . . ."

"And that is?"

"Why," said Casanova, looking worried, "that fire-eating Hungarian brute wants to fight you. . . ."

"Fight me? What for?"

"Because you left him alone to skirmish with those Venetians . . . By the by, why were *they* trying to get into your bedroom?"

There was a note of jealousy in Casanova's last words which sounded more than a little ridiculous. Henriette

completely ignored the challenge, and Casanova was astonished to see the laughter fade from her eyes and her warm cheeks go suddenly pale.

"Venetians! If those men were Venetians they meant to murder me! Leave me—I must dress at once. I shall scarcely be safe from them even in Tuscany. . . ."

"But why should my countrymen . . ."

"Monsieur Casanova, I know of what I'm speaking. Go and tell that Hungarian fool to be ready to start at once."

So saying, she jumped from the bed, holding before her a sheet which concealed her rather less than more.

"But Madamel!" Casanova urged, not unwilling to delay a little, "you forget the Hungarian is serious and you overlook the obligations of your uniform. He is determined to fight a duel. Listen!"

From the neighbouring room came sounds of stamping and a medley of fencing terms, "tierce, quart, parry, point!" mixed with ferocious, "sa, ha! sa, ha!" The Hungarian was evidently preparing, as he had threatened, to cut his comrade's throat.

"I tell you he's a fool!" Henriette stamped her naked foot. "Go, sir, and give him my message."

"He is certainly a man of honour," said Casanova ironically. "He'll instantly abandon the duel when he knows you're a woman. . . ."

"That, neither he nor anyone else here must know. It must be kept a secret. You are quick-witted, Monsieur Casanova. Go to him at once, make some excuse, but see that I get out of this death trap of a place at once. . . ."

If often happens that in some moment of crisis a person's manner is more convincing than his words. True, Henriette had used the phrase "death trap", but Casanova was not unaccustomed to exaggerated language—especially when women were concerned. He would have discounted Henriette's plea as a mere put-off, a device to get him out of the bedroom and herself out of a situation wounding to her modesty, if her manner had not made him feel that she was terribly in earnest. Somehow, for reasons Casanova could

not begin to descry, she evidently was convinced that her life was in danger—a conclusion after all which the recent fight with the disguised Venetians strongly supported. . . .

For a moment Casanova hesitated; the lady-killer unwilling to waste such an opportunity for a swift triumph; then turned, and left the room. As he went he saw from the corner of his eye that Henriette was already huddling on the Austrian hussar's uniform she was wearing as a disguise. But why was she disguised? he wondered.

If Casanova paused a moment in the passage, instead of going straight to the Hungarian, who will blame him? In spite of his conviction that Henriette's life was in danger—and his own, too, though for some reason that had ceased to trouble him—so much had happened in half an hour, so much had to be planned and carried out immediately, that he wanted to collect his thoughts. He hadn't the slightest idea what he could say to the fire-eating Hungarian, whom he could still hear slashing and stamping and "sa-ha'ing" away in his room. And then a dozen questions about Henriette buzzed and irritated in his mind. Why did she keep this mystery about herself? What on earth was she doing in this lonely posting house, disguised as a soldier, travelling with a real soldier, exposed to attack by Venetian cut-throats? If it were not so obvious that the stupid Hungarian hadn't even suspected his companion was a woman, Casanova would have been certain Henriette was his mistress. As it was, pangs of jealousy assailed him as he thought of her in the promiscuity of travel and of the chances that at any moment the Hungarian might make the discovery, whereupon the "honour" of the army would instantly command that he pester his charge with unwanted proposals even to the point of ravishment. And then, what sort of a game was she playing with him, Casanova? Why appoint a rendezvous "in Florence"—specifying no particular place—on a certain day, and then go careering about the roads of Italy with an absurd Hungarian . . .

Hungarian . . . The thought brought Casanova back to his immediate task—to calm this imbecile and somehow get

Henriette away from him. How was it to be done? Casanova hadn't the faintest idea, for whenever he tried to think of this specific problem, all the other problems and mysteries of Henriette jumped up in his mind; and nothing is more certain than that a wandering mind solves no problem . . . Mechanically he crossed the passage, knocked at a door, and entered the Hungarian's room, where he beheld a spectacle which somehow filled him with distaste—a more than ever urgent desire to get rid of this ridiculous and encumbering specimen of the human race.

In his devotion to military ideals the Hungarian had put on his showiest uniform—Casanova saw it was a captain's—glittering with gold and clanking with medals, in order to kill his supposed comrade ceremoniously. With a deadly-looking sabre in his hand he was going through his sword drill with as much calm as if performing before Her Most Sacred Majesty the Empress. Seeing Casanova, the Captain paused in his fictive murders, rested the point of his sabre on the uncarpeted floor, raised his eyebrows and asked:

“Well?”

“Well what?”

“Is he ready? I want my breakfast.”

The absurdity, not to say indecency of this reply, exasperated Casanova. It is true he might have been less sensible of this if Henriette had not been involved, but with all his faults Casanova was no bully—he felt angry at this military idiot whose “honour” was beneath common sense and who valued another human life at less than his own breakfast. The anger was just what was needed to shock Casanova out of his wool-gathering.

“Sir,” he said, stepping up to the Hungarian with a great show of politeness, “the affair is settled with honour on both sides. The Lieutenant does not even ask for an apology, and accepts your explanation.”

The Hungarian could not have looked more astounded if the sabre on which he was leaning had suddenly been metamorphosed into a live eel. He reddened with such a comical mixture of bewilderment and offended dignity that

Casanova had some difficulty in keeping a straight face.

"What the devil, sir," sputtered the Captain fiercely. "What the devil do you mean? You insult me, and I answer all insults thus, sir, thus!" And he brandished his sabre in a way he intended to be extremely impressive, and was in fact violently ridiculous.

"Sir," Casanova urged in his most winning tones, "I trust you will at least be good enough to listen to one who has so recently had the honour of fighting by your side . . . ?" At this appeal the Captain gravely inclined his head like an elderly parrot. "You are a man of intelligence and of honour," Casanova continued flatteringly, "and you must have realized that only one of exceptional merit would have been entrusted with a mission so important as that of guarding the Prince during his incognito. . . ."

"The Prince!" The Captain grew wide-eyed with stupefaction. "What Prince?"

"Oh heavens!" Casanova feigned despair, "did I say 'Prince'? Captain, I throw myself on your generosity to overlook my breach of confidence, and not to give any hint of it to the Prince himself. But such is the fact—and it was by order of the Empress herself that he refrained from fighting, by her order too that his safety was entrusted to one of the best swordsmen in the army."

"A thousand devils!" exclaimed the Captain in a very rapture of astonishment, "but what about my despatches?"

"Damn it," Casanova thought, "I wish I'd remembered that!" Aloud he said:

"They too are of the utmost importance, and I understand that their safe delivery together with the safety of the Prince will ensure your promotion. . . ."

"Promotion!" The Captain's eyes sparkled, for like all poor officers without powerful friends he had found promotion very slow in coming.

"Hush!" Casanova put his finger to his lips. "No time for details now. All will be explained later. Meanwhile, the Prince's life is in danger from those ruffians or others like them. Here is the plan. I am to drive with . . . er . . . the

Lieutenant. You follow close behind in case of attack. At the frontier we separate, you go direct to Livorno and wait for us at the inn. If you hear nothing from us within three days, proceed at once to headquarters and report. . . .”

“But . . .” the Hungarian began, doubtfully.

Casanova swept any possible hesitation grandly aside.

“Sir! Is it a time to bandy words when the Prince’s life is in danger?”

He pulled out his watch, synchronized it with the Captain’s, and announced with an air which put an end to all discussions:

“We start in ten minutes.”

3

CASANOVA fidgeted about the doorway of the inn, looking on to the large posting yard, where a couple of lazy ostlers were putting the horses into the two travelling carriages in the well-known “tomorrow will do” manner. He didn’t attempt to hurry them in the equally well-known manner of producing a tip. On the contrary, while occasionally glancing surreptitiously at his watch, Casanova tried to engage the Captain’s attention by a flow of erotic anecdotes to prevent his noticing the passage of time. Henriette was late, in spite of her conviction of peril, late as women invariably are. The Captain on the other hand was punctual to the second, like all professional military men, and naturally expected a young soldier to be equally punctual even if he were a Prince.

To Casanova’s anxious watchfulness the Captain was already looking sulky and suspicious, but whether it was owing to the delay or whether it was that he was inwardly fuming himself into a state where another fight would be obligatory, Casanova was unable to decide. If only she’d hurry up! Everything was arranged in his mind—a last minute but heavy tip to the Captain’s ostlers to delay him, another tip to his own postillion to get well ahead and shake off the pursuer . . . And then, with Henriette alone . . .

To his stupefaction it was Henriette who absolutely

declined to allow this elegant arrangement. Casanova indeed contrived to bustle her into his carriage before she had time to protest. Shouting over his shoulder to the Captain mendacious promises about meeting him at the frontier Customs post, Casanova called impatiently to the postillion to drive on, and was about to jump into his carriage beside his mysteriously disguised lady.

"Stop!" Henriette called, so decisively that the postillion checked his horses, and looked around to see if something important had been forgotten.

"What is it *now*?" asked Casanova in a ferment of impatience, but trying to keep calm and good-natured.

"The Captain."

"What about him?"

"He must travel with me."

"With you!" Casanova was stupefied. "Do you mean to say you would rather travel with that bore than with me?"

There was so much jealousy in his tone that for a moment Henriette was disconcerted. Glancing round the yard she saw that the scene was being watched by at least a dozen idlers, including the surly innkeeper and the Captain.

"For God's sake don't make a scene here and now," she said imploringly. "It may cost us our lives. I'll explain later—at leisure—when we can be alone together. I must see that military fool safe in Florence."

"*You* see *him* safe in Florence!" Casanova's voice was incredulous, although he had thrilled to the implied promise of her 'when we can be alone together'. "Why! he's guarding you."

"So he thinks," she said, "but I am the brains. He carries despatches which are more important and far more dangerous if captured by the wrong people than even that vain idiot believes. Let me get into his carriage."

"We'll wait for him at the frontier," Casanova pleaded, "at least let me ride that far with you. If you insist, you shall change places there."

"On your honour?"

"On my honour—and love."

Henriette waved to the postillion to drive on, and made room for Casanova to sit beside her. Mindful of his tip and honestly anxious to earn it, the postillion started with an over-zealous haste which nearly spilled Casanova on to the filth of the posting yard. Only his agility and strength saved him from becoming noisome as well as ridiculous, and these are disasters even young love finds difficulty in living down. Thankful for his narrow escape, Casanova relaxed in his seat, all ready to make the best use of his first real *solitude à deux* with Henriette. He had twice saved her life—from the icy canal and from the fiery Captain—had carried her in his arms and had looked upon her in a state of nature, had sacrificed another woman to her and had followed her at a mere beckoning of her hand—surely he was now entitled to his reward, or at least some indication and promise of reward.

Now if ever was the time for the famous Casanova seduction to come into play. He promised—not wholly without hope that the promise might safely be broken, it is true—but he promised to allow Henriette to ride with the Captain after the frontier halt; and already the travelling carriage was lurching and jolting frightfully over the last mile or so of Papal road. At one moment he and Henriette were thrown violently together, at the next separated by a terrific jolt as one of the wheels dropped into a hole. Here was a situation which was made for the old Casanova—opportunities for flirtatious advances, gallant contacts, bold wanderings of hands. And he sat in the post-chaise as dumb as a sack of potatoes, saying and doing nothing. Now that it came to the point, now that there was the chance to begin saying some of the thousands of things he had planned to say to her, of asking her some of the hundreds of questions he meant to ask, he found himself as abashed as a schoolboy suddenly introduced to the first lady of the leg-show with whom he has fallen in love. No human emotion communicates itself so infallibly to others as embarrassment. In a few moments this usually self-possessed young woman felt as awkward and tongue-tied as her lovesick swain.

Such is woman, Henriette might soon have grown angry with the gay Casanova for giving her what was the greatest proof imaginable of his devotion. For Casanova to feel modest and abashed in the presence of a pretty young woman was indeed a novelty. But before Henriette had time to feel annoyed with this touching *gaucherie*, and before the two of them had recovered sufficiently from their embarrassment to exchange a dozen sentences, behold! the too zealous postillion had brought them to the Customs post.

Casanova still hoped he might be able to "lose" the Captain at the frontier, but in spite of Casanova's tips the Captain's carriage came up barely five minutes after they had reached the post and were still engaged in the usual altercation with the surly stupid and suspicious men chosen by sovereign states to greet entering and departing foreigners. One look at the Captain's face warned Casanova of more trouble. Like most of his type, the Hungarian was capable of grasping only one idea at a time. Now he no longer wanted to fight. On the contrary, he was determined not to allow "the Prince" out of sight, zealous to discharge his duty as escort and hopeful of the long overdue promotion. Casanova evidently had been a little too clever in his device for avoiding a duel. Much time was wasted in an acrimonious dispute as to who was to travel with "the Lieutenant", which was only settled by "the Lieutenant" announcing that "he" intended to travel alone and they could follow or precede him as they chose.

Owing to various delays, rain, and above all fatigue they agreed to spend the night at Siena. By this time Casanova had regained a grip on himself. He saw that by his behaviour about and to "the Lieutenant" he was risking the one thing he most wanted to avoid, namely, rousing the Hungarian's suspicions and so risking his discovery that "the Lieutenant" or "Prince" was a woman. Moreover, if the Hungarian was to be got rid of, Casanova realized that the first step must be to thaw the dull mental weather which held the three of them in uncomfortable discontent. It would never do to continue grumping along the road.

Casanova took charge as soon as he reached the inn. He

secured the interest of the landlord by hiring the best rooms, by ordering the best wine, and by advancing money to buy luxuries. He flattered the landlady, joked with the cook, pinched the chambermaid's bottom, and generally made himself agreeable. These refined preparations bore fruit in the shape of an excellent meal. Barrack-room jests in the language though not the style of Cicero drew horse-laugh from the Hungarian. A witty story and a compliment in French brought a smile to Henriette's lips. Casanova laughed, talked, interpreted for his companions, amused them, flattered them, kept the bottle going, radiated the energy, good fellowship and charm of a young Dionysus. After dinner he had enough self-control to lose a few ducats to the Hungarian at cards, while "the Lieutenant" made this an excuse to go off to bed. In spite of this dull end to the evening, Casanova was pleased with himself. Tomorrow they would be in Florence; tomorrow he would get rid of the Captain; tomorrow he would at last be alone with Henriette. . . .

Tomorrow came, and, as before, Casanova and the Captain in their carriage followed close behind Henriette in hers. When they reached Florence they lost sight of her chaise in the narrow twisting streets, and when they reached the inn-yard Casanova saw with anger and dismay that she had not left her carriage. On the contrary, she was sitting tranquilly in the mud-spattered vehicle while the steaming muddy horses were being changed for fresh ones, with the evident intention of driving on.

"Look at . . .!" Casanova exclaimed sharply, and checked himself instantly, for he had been about to say: "Look at her."

"Look at what?" asked the Hungarian, staring about him, as people do when they think they are missing something. But Casanova did not answer. He was already striding through the dirty inn-yard towards Henriette who, in the bustle of arrivals and departures, had not seen her two friends drive in.

"What does this mean?" Casanova asked angrily.

There was a stridency in his voice which made her look at him questioningly

"I don't understand. . . ."

Casanova laughed scornfully.

"It is not so difficult for me to understand—that I have been made a dupe, Madame. Wasn't it here, in Florence, that you ordered me to meet you?"

"I said the 30th. Today is only the 19th. . . ."

"Is the date so important, Madame?" Casanova asked impatiently. "Surely you could have . . ."

He broke off, for he noticed the Hungarian was at hand, having picked his way cautiously across the dungy yard to avoid soiling his polished military boots. Henriette also noticed him, and said hurriedly to Casanova:

"Can you find a room where we can be alone for five minutes? Tell the Captain to sit here, and wait for me."

Casanova led the way into the inn; and the key of a gold coin instantly unlocked the door of a private room for them. As happens to people in moments of stress, Casanova, while apparently wholly concentrated on Henriette, was mechanically registering details that he never forgot. He noticed that the room, though lofty, was fusty from lack of airing; that the ceiling was painted with a picture of Aurora in her chariot leaving Tithonus, that the heavy velvet curtains needed dusting, that the furniture was old and clumsy. . . .

Henriette rounded on Casanova, as the door closed behind the inn servant.

"Why are you so impatient? Why do you mistrust me?"

Casanova was taken aback by this, for he had intended to do the verbal attacking.

"Well, why do you elude me? Why are you so mysterious?" he retorted.

Henriette for a moment looked as if she were about to make an angry reply. She checked herself, and laid a small white hand lightly on his sleeve.

"Don't let us quarrel the first time we are alone together! If you had done as I said, come here on the 30th, these troubles wouldn't have happened. . . ."

"But you didn't tell me not to come before the 30th!" exclaimed Casanova, "and you will admit that your letters err on the side of brevity!" Henriette smiled. "And if I had not started instantly, those scoundrels at the frontier . . ."

"I know, I know," she said. "Believe me, I am grateful. But you are as suspicious of me as if I were a light woman. And as jealous of me as if I were already your wife. . . ."

Casanova caught her hand and lifted it to his lips.

"But you will be my wife? Promise me that!"

"How can I make such a promise when I have hardly spoken to you? Isn't it enough that I've risked—ah, more than you know!—to meet you, faithless and libertine as you are. . . ."

"But why can't we get rid of that Hungarian, and stay here together?"

"Because I must go on from here."

"With the Captain?"

"Ah, now you are being jealous again," Henriette smiled. "I promise you that within an hour the Captain shall be parted from me for ever."

"But why must you go?" Casanova asked. "Let me take care of you. . . ."

"I have instructions." Henriette lifted her left hand which held a letter, the seal of which, to Casanova's amazement, was the official coat of arms of Austria.

"To meet Baron von Schaumburg?" he asked, suddenly remembering that unpleasant diplomat.

"Now you are being insulting . . . I must go."

"May I come with you?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"I'll explain later—perhaps. Stay here until the 30th. If I am not in Florence by that date, I'll send you a message. I must go. . . ."

"By whose orders?" Casanova detained her, "your father's? Your husband's?"

"I am not married, and my father is dead."

"Then in God's name, why. . . ."

"We shall not be separated for long."

"Then you do care for me?"

Instead of replying, she wrenched free from his grip and ran from the room, Casanova after her. As luck would have it, a party of gentlemen, in bagwigs and swords, emerged at that moment from a room where they had been breakfasting, and cut him off from the retreating figure in the neat officer's uniform. In those punctilious days an attempt to push through the group would almost certainly have meant a duel; and by the time Casanova reached the outer door of the inn, he was too late to see anything of his lady but the muddy travelling carriage lurching under the high arch of the inn-yard into the street. For the third time she had successfully given him the slip!

4

A BAFFLED and bewildered Casanova remained standing at the threshold of the inn staring into the courtyard. The bustle of morning arrivals and departures had subsided, the inn was settling down to the humdrum business of the day, ostlers and stable-boys lounged about discussing women and the price of oats, while two, more energetic, began cleaning the yard with brooms and sluicing pails of water. Casanova's mud-stained carriage stood there with the baggage still strapped to it, and the empty shafts pointing up desolately to a grey sky.

A dim cloud of discouragement settled on him, as if the actual sky had somehow become part of him, darkening his life. He had that feeling of let-down, of helpless-seeming disorientation, which at some time or other comes to everybody when suddenly separated from friends and penned lonely and friendless in a scarcely known town. Above all, the feeling of vacancy is oppressive if such an interlude comes after a time of violent and exciting action such as Casanova had experienced in the last three days. Three days!

He could not believe so much had happened in so short a time.

Another complex of feelings, new to him, contributed to Casanova's depression as he stood there on that dull morning of threatening rain as the carriage rolled Henriette and the Hungarian away from him—where? It was certainly not the first time Casanova had been outwitted by a woman, but it was the only time he had felt helpless before a woman's will. He flushed as he thought that all along he had followed when she called, and had not dared to apply the Casanova procedure to her. That very morning when he had surprised her, he had had her at his mercy, and yet had done nothing. If he had taken her like a man then, she would now be running after him instead of running off with another man—and what a man! Casanova thought of all the most cynical maxims about women he could recollect, and applied them to Henriette, gaining thereby about the same amount of solace a man with toothache gets from pulling at the sore tooth. He was surprised to find that he no longer believed in these maxims, and even felt ashamed of them. Something extraordinary had happened to Casanova when the thought of a woman made him feel unworthy.

How long he might have stood there moralizing in this vein it is impossible to say, but a sharp shower interrupted his sentimental reverie and drove him indoors. He went back to the private room he had paid for to have those few brief minutes of not very conclusive or satisfactory talk, but somehow he couldn't stay in the room. Something there made him feel restless—he thought it might be the old furniture or perhaps the slightly musty atmosphere. It couldn't possibly have been a slim feminine ghost oddly dressed in military uniform saying: "don't let us quarrel the first time we are alone together," and "you are as jealous of me as if I were already your wife," and "stay here until the 30th," and "I'm not married, my father is dead. . . ."

Unable to endure it Casanova went down to the public rooms, and, coming across the landlord, almost mechanically ordered a bedroom and asked for his baggage to be brought

in from the rain. But he ordered the room for one night only—he had not made up his mind whether to wait until the 30th and see what happened or to follow the promptings of injured vanity and push on immediately for Venice. In Venice, whispered vanity, there are plenty of pretty, willing girls to make you forget Henriette; but some deeper self-knowledge warned that while he would certainly find the girls he wouldn't find forgetfulness. The debate within him was an arid and foolish one, and would not have happened but for wounded vanity and for that air of mystery about Henriette which irritated while it enticed Casanova. The mystery was interesting only so long as it didn't interfere with his plans, which it seemed to do perpetually.

The shower passed, the clouds thinned, and long shafts of moving sunlight flashed on the distant Apennines. Unable to remain quietly at rest and for some reason not very anxious to call on the one or two persons he knew in Florence, Casanova walked out alone, finding his way past the cathedral to the banks of the Arno. It is strange to think that though Gian Gastone, "last of the Medici", was dead and Francis of Lorraine reigned in his place, medieval and Renaissance Florence were still almost intact. Even stranger is the thought that nobody in the world then cared about it—travellers stopped to stare at a few antiques and a few pictures, and were blind to the city which is second intellectually only to Athens.

Casanova was no exception. Even if he had not been absorbed in his passion for Henriette he would have had no eyes for the beauty round him. Yet, perhaps because he was genuinely in love for the first and last time in his long erotic career, he had his moment of vision. In his walk he stopped on one of the bridges and looked along the Arno, with its curved line of palaces on one side and the backs of old houses on the other, and beyond them the olive gardens and the cypresses of San Miniato and the nightingales singing in them, while at his feet flowed the drought-shrunken river whose jade green was only now tinged with the first turbid yellow of the rain wash. And for a moment this adventurer

was lifted out of himself, for he remembered that in time all this would pass, yet it would long outlive him, and Henriette. . . .

He could not bear the thoughts which came from solitude, and like most people in most epochs condemned them, if he ever experienced them, as unhealthy. He hurried to the gardens of the Cascine, which were thronged with foot passengers looking at the parade of fashionable coaches and carriages, where ladies with huge, built-up coiffures and diamond ear-rings gravely acknowledged the bows of gentlemen in powdered wigs and brocaded waistcoats. Casanova looked at the spectacle with the indifference of familiarity—it was after all, much like the afternoon parade in any other big Italian town—and only welcomed it because the movement and chatter and all the play and by-play of the human comedy distracted his eye and mind from unwholesome thoughts of death engendered by funereal cypresses.

Indeed, this animated scene would have passed from his memory like many another trifling diversion to ennui, but for one swift episode which burned into his memory for life a picture of the gilded coaches, the high-stepping horses, the pompous coachmen with gold-lace hats, the haughty lackeys hanging on behind, the trees still moist and glittering from the rain, the vast purple clouds seething up over the distant mountains. He was gazing at it at one moment with lack-lustre indifference, still debating in the back of his mind whether to go on to Venice or to stay and see if Henriette returned, and the next moment was rigid and alert with half a dozen mixed emotions—surprise, curiosity, fear, desire. A slowly moving carriage had passed near Casanova containing only one passenger, a beautifully dressed, handsome and proud-looking woman, who as she was carried past him looked him full in the face with an expression which said: “I know who you are and you know me, but I’m not going to recognize you.”

This woman was Donna Giulietta.

It was perhaps half a minute before Casanova recovered sufficiently from his emotions to regain control of his limbs.

His first purely reflex action was to try to follow the coach and find out why Donna Giulietta was in Florence, but of course, the concourse of people was too heavy for him to push a way through quickly. He abandoned the attempt, telling himself that a personage as well known as Donna Giulietta could not stay in Florence without it's being known. Nevertheless he continued to walk in the direction of his hotel as fast as the concourse of people would allow, for movement of some sort there had to be to carry off his inner agitation.

Donna Giulietta in Florence! And so soon! It was the last thing in the world Casanova would have expected, a possibility he had never even thought of. And he didn't like it at all. He didn't like the suspicion, verging uneasily towards certainty, that other people were taking the initiative in life away from him, and these were precisely the persons he had come to look upon as his special and delectable prey—women. What was Donna Giulietta doing in Florence? Was it a mere coincidence, or had she intentionally followed him? If so, how had she come so quickly, and how had she known where to follow him? In his confusion Casanova forgot the night spent by him and his companions at Siena during which Donna Giulietta could have travelled, forgot also that Father Bernadino had seen him at Ercole's tavern, and that, friend though Ercole was, the threat of the Acquavivas' wrath would instantly have procured information from him. To Casanova's startled conscience Donna Giulietta's sudden appearance seemed inexplicable, a kind of unpleasant miracle. And as he strode along, faster now that he had reached a street less cumbered with returning coaches, he asked himself another question with even more acute anxiety—if Donna Giulietta *had* followed him, in what spirit did she come? He knew enough of the spirit of bitter vengeance in the Roman character to know that the anger of such a woman against him might be fatal. He must, he decided, be very careful.

But who can imagine prudence in a scatterbrain like Casanova, when it was his reckless following of imprudent

impulses which made his life so adventurous? At any rate, his method of being prudent was not very intelligent. Having ascertained from a barber—for the barber was the ancestor of the journalist—that Donna Giulietta had arrived with only a maid and the footmen Casanova had seen hanging behind her coach, and was staying in one of the palaces near Santa Croce, Casanova proceeded to shut himself up in his inn for fear of assassination or some similar violence to his person. It did not occur to him that the vengeance of Donna Giulietta, if she felt revengeful, might be less crude and more lingering. And how if she were not vengeful at all, but still in love with the incomparable, the irresistible Casanova, pining her heart out among the dull Contessas, asking only to be kissed back to smiles and good will?

The thought occurred to Casanova after he had almost driven himself into melancholia by remaining shut up in his bedroom for three days without seeing a person but the chambermaid, who was too ugly even for him, and the landlord who was a peasant from Val d'Elsa and had none of the Florentine earthy humour and intelligence, and so was not worth listening to. The fact is that Casanova was now yearning for some excuse to throw his "prudence" overboard. His decision to hide at the inn until Henriette returned—if she did return—on the 30th had already been worn pretty thin by the fretful boredom of confinement. Hang it, the woman couldn't eat him, and it was four days since he had seen Henriette, and he was curious to know exactly how Donna Giulietta *did* feel about it, and . . .

"Send me the barber and get me a box at the opera for tonight!" he said to the bowing landlord, who rejoiced to see a guest become normal, especially as Casanova ordered a bottle of French wine with his dinner. . . .

It was a gala night at the small theatre used for the primitive opera of those days—a new and brilliant *castrato* from Naples was to be heard, at least if his voice was powerful enough to subdue the buzz of conversation with which it was then fashionable to greet a singer. As the Duke was to be present it was "impossible" to get a seat until Casanova had

imperturbably produced the universal remedy for such impossibilities by paying double price. He was glad he had done so, as he stood alone in his box, dressed in his finery, such as it was, with spotless lace and gold buttons—or at any rate buttons that looked like gold—coolly surveying the audience through an unnecessary lorgnette. In spite of his self-satisfaction and aplomb he could not restrain a tremor—of what? Some might have said “fear”, others “excitement”—as he caught sight of Donna Giulietta *in fiocchi* (full evening dress) and diamonds, with another aristocratic woman, a canon of Santa Croce, and a young man who spent much of his time admiring a beautiful solitaire diamond he wore in a ring.

There was another tremor in store for Casanova when, during an interval he was politely accosted by the young man, who introduced himself as the Cavaliere Montespina, and said:

“Donna Giulietta would like to see you in her box.”

For a moment Casanova hesitated. A tremor, like a flash of lightning in the night, warned him of danger, and his mind groped for some adequate excuse to evade the invitation. What could he think of? What could he say? But nothing adequate presented itself, and the young man was waiting, politely but with an expression of well-bred surprise at a gentleman’s hesitating over any lady’s commands. There was nothing to do but to bow and follow, and be introduced to Donna Giulietta’s friends, and make polite conversation and try to invent some plausible reason for being in Florence, some not utterly incoherent account of himself.

Again Casanova felt a tremor when he saw Donna Giulietta’s eyes glowing with a curious inner light as he entered the box, expressing some emotion he could not guess. Was it hatred, he wondered, or an almost animal desire? At all events, with that scene in the Rome bedroom still vivid in his memory—Donna Giulietta consenting and half naked on his bed, while he rushed madly away for—to her knowledge—no apparent reason—Casanova trembled at that glow in her

eyes. And again when the young man, alluding to Casanova's brief hesitation, remarked that Signor Casanova must be something of a recluse to want to avoid his friends, Donna Giulietta said:

"Signor Casanova has strange habits of suddenly abandoning his best friends. It is inexplicable and—unpardonable."

And her large fan waved, almost—so Casanova apprehensively thought—like the waving of a tiger's tail before the spring.

"Ah, Signora," he said gravely, "sometimes there are tragic events in a man's life which give rise to actions which the man himself frankly admits look inexplicable, and would be unpardonable if they had not made him as unhappy as he was helpless to avoid them."

Donna Giulietta shrugged, as if to say that she was uninterested in his explanations and unwilling to believe even if she listened to them. Nevertheless just as the resumption of the music gave Casanova an excuse to return to his own box, she said to him:

"Do you stay long in Florence, Signor Casanova?"

"I'm not sure," Casanova stammered, in his nervous state thrown off his balance by the direct question. "That is—I expect to be here a week or more."

"Ah. And you are alone?"

"Quite alone, Signora."

She turned her head indifferently, waving her fan, to speak to her woman friend, and then called to him as he opened the door:

"I receive every evening at eight."

Casanova bowed.

As he hurried back to his box through the dim corridor, Casanova told himself he had made a grave mistake in allowing himself to link up again with "that woman". He said it again as she bowed graciously to him from the throng waiting for carriages when the show was over, and the *castrato* had been proclaimed with proper enthusiasm as marvellous, incomparable, the greatest singer of all time, a voice worthy of Apollo. And he kept saying it to himself

as he prepared for bed. In a week Henriette would be back in Florence. Now that he was again potentially unfaithful to her, Casanova for some reason was convinced that she would come back, although earlier when his mind was entirely occupied by thoughts of her he had felt grave doubts about it. Now he had none. In a week she would be back, he decided as he got into bed, and they must be married and then—do what? Casanova had no certain plans, and no particular ambition except the vague fairy-tale ending to every courtship—that they should live happy ever after. At any rate, he thought, settling down to sleep, he had not committed himself in any way to Donna Giulietta. He would not go to her evening reception, not see her again, but remain loyally waiting for Henriette.

In pursuance of this wise resolution Casanova stayed in bed late, lunched frugally, and spent the afternoon and early evening at a secret gambling place he had heard about from his barber friend. He was so successful at the *faro* table that the alarmed proprietor took him aside and offered him either a hundred gold florins of Florence to stop playing or a percentage of winnings on condition that Casanova held the bank for five hours every day. Highly elated by this stroke of luck, which nicely filled up empty pockets which had not yet been burdened by any subsidy from old Bragadin, Casanova felt that the world was once more at his feet. He found himself unable to remember why he had felt so suspicious of Donna Giulietta the day before. What on earth was there to be feared? But Henriette—what would she say if she knew? Casanova had no difficulty in answering himself with great contempt that being in love with one woman was no reason for ceasing to see all other women whatsoever. . . .

So of course he went to Donna Giulietta's evening and, apart from a few moments of uneasiness on entering and from an occasional pang of repentance as he thought of Henriette, enjoyed himself very much. Donna Giulietta was charming, chatted with him gaily in his turn as she went from guest to guest, and introduced him to pretty Florentines, whose

accent when they talked Italian amused Casanova as much as his amused them. "Signor Hasanova" they called him, a rasping Tuscan aspirate taking the place of the "k" sound. It was a source of endless little jokes and opportunities for sly and waggish innuendos much appreciated by the carefully guarded ladies. Even Donna Giulietta joined in them, but Casanova was very careful not to follow up any of the opportunities she gave or seemed to give him. If he began making serious love to her again he was afraid either that he would bring down on himself a snub so cutting that even he would shrink under it, or that she would ask him point blank why he had deserted her so abruptly and in a manner so ungentlemanly at so interesting a moment? And for the life of him Casanova, with all his ingenuity and all his practice in making women believe his fictions, could think of no explanation either plausible or even mildly credible, except the true one—and there were times when he bowed over Giulietta's chair, looking down on her lovely bare shoulders and the hidden curves of her breasts, that Casanova doubted whether the truth were either credible or creditable to him. At any rate, he could think of no excuse to flatter or even avoid offending Donna Giulietta's vanity, and the best his astuteness could do was to avoid giving any opening for discussing the matter.

Nevertheless, his heart as well as his head told him that he was playing a game both foolish and dangerous, as well as the very reverse of loyal to Henriette. What would he have thought of her if she had been doing the same sort of thing? Casanova knew perfectly well, and so took care not to ask himself the question. Every night when he returned to his inn, he promised himself that he would not go again, and every evening as the time came either for the reception or the opera, he weakened and went.

A letter, enclosing a banker's draft, came from Senator Bragadin, and the kindest of fathers could hardly have been more indulgent and sympathetic. Admitting that the sojourn in Rome had been a mistake, he did not blame Casanova for the failure—indeed somewhat unnecessarily poor old

Bragadin took on himself the responsibility for what was assuredly not his fault. He urged Casanova to return immediately to Venice, and in vague and general but nevertheless urgent terms warned him that he was in considerable danger which might at any moment become fatal—Solomon's Key, which he urged Giacomo to consult at once, would confirm this and outline his future conduct.

Putting the money carefully into an inner pocket, Casanova carelessly tore up the poor old Senator's letter. Yet with each transverse rending of the paper, Casanova's movements grew more languid and uncertain, then ceased altogether as he stood with the torn fragments held between his fingers. There had suddenly come to his mind a piece of information which until that moment he had disregarded. As was natural, a great lady like Donna Giulietta never saw him alone, but always attended by one or two ladies, and one or more vague men with titles, who, Casanova had carelessly assumed, were the kind of idle young fellows always to be found hanging about pretty women. And that very morning his loquacious barber had told him, among other facts, gossip and surmises, that the three most constant of these young men were notoriously the best swordsmen in Tuscany. Why? Casanova suddenly asked himself. Was he concerned?

He threw the pieces of the Senator's letter into a waste basket, shrugged, and went back to the inn to dress for dinner and the opera. Already he had ceased to take for himself a box, and always joined the Marchesa in hers; which fact, if not a declaration that he was accepted as *cavalier*, *servente*, was at least a step in that direction. He was a little late in arriving and the music had already started as he entered the box, and punctiliously lifted the Marchesa's hand to his lips.

"You are late," she said reproachfully, as if she had a right to chide him.

"The horse bringing me slipped and broke a shaft and its own knees, poor brute," said Casanova lightly. "I had to walk."

He pointed to his otherwise immaculate white silk stockings, which were flecked with mud. Donna Giulietta lifted her brows and waved her fan slightly, as if unwilling to consider a world in which such sordid failings occurred. She engaged Casanova in conversation in spite of the irritated calls of "Shush! shush!" from a few lovers of music in the neighbourhood.

"There is to be an excursion to Poggio a Caiano tomorrow," she said ignoring the protests. "The Grand Duke has given permission. I am taking a few friends, and we shall picnic in the gardens. I shall need you, Casanova, to entertain my guests and to keep the lackeys in order. . . ."

Casanova bowed smilingly, and was about to make some conventionally urbane answer, when words and smile alike were frozen, and an expression of mingled horror, shame and delight came over it, as for the first time he noticed the occupants or rather one of the occupants of a box on the opposite side of the tiny theatre. Seated next to a handsome young man Casanova instantly recognized as the Austrian *chargé d'affaires* in Tuscany, was a beautiful young woman, fashionably though not extravagantly dressed, and wearing some very fine diamonds.

The woman was Henriette, and even as he recognized her Casanova remembered that it was the 30th of the month. The complex of emotions which struck Casanova—delight at seeing she had kept her word, horror at himself for having forgotten the date, shame at finding himself publicly committed to another woman—may be easily imagined. Of course he made instant efforts to hide them, and dropped back in his seat with affected languor and indifference after staring fixedly at Henriette for a full half-minute. Anybody but an imbecile would have noticed that something had occurred to interest and move him, and Donna Giulietta was quick enough to notice which box it was he was gazing at. A flash of intense malevolence lit up her eyes, and then once more she was cool and indifferent, apparently dropping the talk to listen to the music and singing, but in fact watching Casanova like a feline, and noting the changing expression on

his mobile face with a fiendish intelligence of interpretation which beat any feline.

Casanova, for his part, stole a glance or two at her, and seeing her apparent calm indifference, assumed rashly that she had noticed nothing, or at least nothing suspicious. He was very anxious indeed that Donna Giulietta and Henriette should not meet, and equally anxious that Donna Giulietta should not suspect that he was interested in the beautiful girl opposite or even that he was known to her. Therefore he immediately checked his impulse to rush from the box, and this time undoubtedly showed more self-control than in the Rome bedroom. He waited for the first interval, and waited in a frenzy of impatience which made this opera act seem to have expanded into an interminable series of acts, each duller and longer than the one before. How he cursed the recitatives, the mannerisms of the tenor who seemed to delight in holding up the action while he showed off, the trills and roulades of the soprano, the interminable duets and trios, and above all the maddening enthusiasm of the Florentine melomaniacs who insisted on encoring everything and exasperatingly prolonged their applause until it was repeated.

But at last even the musical enthusiasm of an Italian audience must have rest, and even the longest opera act come to an end. The curtain dropped, the singers bowed, the applause died away; and still Casanova controlled himself. At last, rising from his seat in what he hoped was a languid and indifferent way, he announced that he wanted to stretch his legs and asked Donna Giulietta's permission to leave her box—with the full intention of not returning and of never seeing her again. He meant to send a note to Henriette, saying he was waiting for her but was prevented from coming to her box.

He was already wording this note in his mind, and hardly noticed what Donna Giulietta was saying:

"I prefer you to remain with me this evening, Don Giacomo."

As the meaning of these words penetrated Casanova's mind, he started and flushed. A box at the opera was some-

thing like a lady's drawing-room, and she had a perfect right to give orders to her guests. Nevertheless, convention expected that no such tyranny as this reply implied should be practised except perhaps on a very hen-pecked *cicisbeo*.

"Signora?" Casanova's voice registered his astonishment.

"I say I need you by me this evening—the whole evening—I have a hundred orders to give you about tomorrow. In short, pray sit down, sir."

"Madame," said Casanova bowing politely, "I fully grant your right to the obedience of all your humble servants, but in this case I must beg leave to hand you over to the care of the Conte Giuseppe and . . ."

"The Conte entirely shares my opinion that you should stay as asked," said Donna Giulietta sharply.

"But really, Donna Giulietta, this passes a joke," Casanova protested. "You cannot mean . . ."

"I mean you are to sit down, and remain there until I give you leave to go," said Donna Giulietta haughtily.

Casanova drew himself up with equal hauteur, and in spite of her peremptory tone and the flash of her imperious eyes, turned to go—and found himself face to face with the Conte, who had risen from his seat, and now stood with arms folded and his back leaning against the door. In a flash Casanova saw that he was caught in a trap which had evidently long been prepared between Donna Giulietta and the Conte, and sprung by some prearranged signal. He looked uncertainly from the wooden face of the Conte to Donna Giulietta's bitterly mocking smile. If he tried to push past the Conte, if he asked him to move, nay, if Casanova even took a step forward, he would instantly be met with a challenge he could not possibly refuse, and to accept which would be pretty certainly fatal. As Casanova had learned from his chatty barber only that morning, the Conte was the most deadly of the three duellists attending Donna Giulietta.

Now Donna Giulietta did not know Henriette was the woman for whose sake Casanova had humiliated her so bitterly and ignominiously in Rome; but she saw that there was something between Casanova and the woman in the box.

Had she known the whole truth she might have egged on the Count to insults, which would have ended in Casanova's getting his throat cut. No doubt she intended to do this eventually, but meanwhile she was amusing herself by tormenting her one-time lover. Casanova guessed part of her intention at any rate, and tried to submit with a good grace, but the smile on his face was a wry one and that face itself pale and troubled, as he bowed and reseated himself. This was a bad situation he had not foreseen, and he could have kicked himself for his carelessness and blind vanity in allowing himself to be caught in such a trap by a woman.

What was to be done? He kept telling himself to keep calm and the right idea would come, but nothing came. At moments he felt heroic and burned to insult the Conte and Donna Giulietta, to accept the challenge and then whirl out of the box to Henriette and fly with her at once to . . . It didn't much matter asking where, for in the first place he had no assurance she would fly anywhere with him, and in the second he knew perfectly well that if he allowed himself to be provoked into a duel with the Conte, it would have to take place at once, by torchlight, somewhere behind the Boboli Gardens—which, as the Conte was used to such midnight eccentricities and Casanova was not, would completely ensure Signor Casanova's speedy demise.

There was nothing for it then but to sit and smile and smile, and hate Donna Giulietta, and hope to heaven Henriette hadn't noticed him. But of course she had noticed him; she had seen him, as he knew perfectly well, before he had seen her, and as he flushed with chagrin to observe, she was watching him continuously, not troubling to look at the moving crowd during the *entr'acte*, nor paying any heed to her companion's remarks. What made his position so ridiculous and drove him almost wild with exasperation was that Donna Giulietta pretended to be on the best of terms with him, and kept making little flirtatious advances while she flayed him with her tongue and stabbed him with vengeful eyes.

"Signor Casanova is very fickle," she said over his head

to the Conte, "he never keeps either a friend or a mistress long—do you, Prince Charming?"

And she leaned towards him until her head was almost on his shoulder, while she patted his arm in mock affection.

"You are harsh, Marchesa," Casanova protested lamely.

"Harsh? Oh, no!" Her laugh rippled out with a seeming gaiety which made even chatterers stop and look at the couple flirting so openly. "I have been only too kind in my time. Such a pity it was to a blackguard."

And while her eyes darted fury at him, she fawned on him so that to those watching she seemed like a foolish amorous woman so entranced that she must publish her desire to the world.

"Clearly that was before you knew me, Donna Giulietta," said Casanova, stung by the word to pluck up heart and wits to answer back. "There are shady characters even among the Roman aristocracy."

"How do you know that?" she sneered, "except by hearsay. To my certain knowledge you were never asked to any house but the Acquavivas."

"It was of them I was thinking," he retorted, smiling with apparent amiability, and hating to do it, for Henriette must see, however much he kept his eyes from her.

Donna Giulietta in her turn now winced, for the cut at that family, of her relations with whom she was fantastically proud, exasperated her so that she was ready to hack at him with daggers.

"That is more than you know," she whispered furiously. "There are many things you don't know. One is that an Acquaviva never forgets to revenge an insult."

"An Acquaviva?" Casanova raised his eyebrows. "I did not know your links with the family were anything but . . ."

He cut off the last word which was "illegitimate" with a cough, and the Conte for some reason intervened to say:

"Donna Giulietta is related to the present Acquavivas in the fourth degree."

"How interesting," Casanova sneered, and then suddenly changing his tone to the Marchesa, "but why are we saying

these things to each other? As if we were rehearsing parts in a bitter comedy.”

“It is no comedy with me, I assure you,” the Marchesa threw back at him, yet in spite of herself in a gentler tone.

“Oh, come now, you are angry I know,” Casanova said, in his most engaging tones, turning on his famous charm at full pressure, “and I admit you have every reason. Good God, Madame, if I did not know there were reasons, excuses, explanations of the weightiest kind to attenuate the action which so rightly offended you—why, did I not know this, I say, I should be tempted to commit suicide in despair.”

“What reasons, what explanations?” Donna Giulietta asked, in spite of herself, for she had determined not to allow herself to listen to the persuasions of the most persuasive male liar who ever made a woman believe the worse was the better cause. “They’ll have to be cogent indeed to persuade me.”

But, instead of her mock caresses which had made Casanova shudder, they seemed somehow so horribly like roses by an open grave, she leaned back, frowning, and trying to read his face with sharp quick glances. Casanova shrugged, once more master of himself.

“Ah, Marchesa, do you ask me that here, in a theatre, with the Conte—dear friend of ours though he is—an unwitting and unwilling witness . . . ?”

“The Conte knows nothing of our quarrel and its reason,” she interrupted, and Casanova getting cooler and more self-controlled all the time, noticed how her nostrils vibrated and her beautiful breasts rose and fell with her emotion. “It is death to speak of it.”

Casanova bowed.

“It shall never be known to anyone but myself,” he said gravely. “That I swear. But as I live only to clear myself with you . . . ”

“That is impossible,” she interjected. “Nothing could explain such . . . ”

“Such a misfortune,” Casanova put in smilingly, now in his turn bending towards her amorously, with a winning

smile. "Yes," he continued, "the most appalling of misfortunes. . . ." He broke off abruptly and stared at her left hand with a look of horror on his face.

"What is it?" the Marchesa asked, genuinely surprised and in some concern. "What are you staring at?"

"That ring!" Casanova said hoarsely, pointing. "The ruby on your third finger. Surely it cannot . . . Yes, it is. Oh, perfidious, it is the ring I gave to Marco Valieri, the man who was nearer my heart than any other, and he gave you the ring he vowed always to keep in memory of our friendship. Ah, human nature . . . !"

"You are mistaken," said Donna Giulietta, taking the ring from her finger. "It is an old family heirloom, I assure you."

"May I see it?"

Casanova took the ring from her hand and stood up to hold it closer to the cluster of candles hung beside the box.

"You are right," he exclaimed fervently. "Thank God it is not my ring, but . . ."

In the excess of his emotion his hands trembled so much that the ring slipped from his clasp and, in his desperate effort to recover it, he knocked it over the edge of the box down among the crowd in the parterre.

"Clumsy fool!" Casanova exclaimed. "No matter. I'll get it for you."

And before the Marchesa or the equally surprised Conte could move, Casanova took a flying leap for the door, swung through it into the corridor, clapped it behind him, and rushed for the stairs. In a few seconds, and while the Conte was still trying to get out of the box, Casanova had wormed his way past a dozen chattering groups, down the stairs and out into the street—helped by the fact that at the very moment of his flight the interval ended, with the ringing of a bell which sent all the loungers hastening to their seats and effectively cut off the Conte's chance of catching up with him.

5

ONE of Casanova's maxims, which however he was careful to keep to himself, was that lowly friends are not only more sincere than the exalted, but are sometimes very much more useful. Thus he had made good friends of the Roman tavern-keepers and, in the same way, more from genuine liking than from any base calculation, had made friends with the Florentine barber, Cino—whose other name, if he had one, Casanova had not bothered to enquire.

Now, finding himself hatless and cloakless in the dark muddy streets of Florence with a chill night wind blowing off the distant Apennine snow-crests, with a virago and a duellist behind him, and a certainly perplexed, probably offended and possibly lost mistress before him, Casanova was in a devilish situation, the kind of situation where a man sorely feels the need of a friend. He shivered as a deep puddle soaked his evening shoes, already dampened by his walk, and as a breeze shot round the corner of a vast stone palace and chilled his hot skin. A friend, a friend! Where was Marco? Where Bragadin? Where . . . he could name a score of good fellows, all unluckily a couple of hundred miles from Florence . . . And that very wind, so boorish, so threatening even to healthy lungs, put him in mind of Cino by threatening also to whisk his wig into the unsavory kennel.

It is the obvious mark of a successful man of action to know when he has a good idea and to act on it without delay. Disregarding puddles and cold winds, Casanova took to his heels and splashed and stumbled and swore his way through the dank old streets until he came to the little alley where on a corner Cino practised his art, among brass shaving-bowls, guitars and the endless gossip of Florence. Cino started in some astonishment as Casanova plunged into the overheated little shop bringing with him a blast of cold air and outdoors animation.

“Signor Casanova! And what brings you here in such a hurry?”

"Need for your advice and help. Is your back-shop empty?"

Late as it was Cino was still at work, curling a wig for an attorney who wanted it back in all haste. Heaven knows an honest man needs to beware of offending any lawyer, but nevertheless Cino laid down his work with not even a sigh, and followed his impetuous friend through a bead curtain into a little cubby-hole of a room where Cino lived, dined, slept, and compounded the unguents, powders and perfumes required for his art.

"You must help me to get her," said Casanova. "If I lose her I shall cut my throat."

Italian barbers are seldom cynics like their fellow craftsmen of other lands—such inordinate gossips cannot help pitying and liking the human race which provides them with so much entertainment. By appealing to his sentimentalism, his florid sense of drama, Casanova hit the right note with sure instinct. Cino dropped into an arm-chair and spread out his hands:

"Tell me the whole story," he said generously—what entertainment for a whole week's customers!

"The whole story?" Casanova shook his head gravely. "My dear friend, that would keep us up all night—and we must act, act, and act wisely. Tonight I have been a poltroon and a brave man, a fool and a sage, a betrayer and incurably constant. Tonight the mistress I love sat in her box and saw me—fool that I am—flirting or seeming to flirt with the mistress I don't love."

"*Per Bacco!*" said Cino, his eyes popping from his head.

"If I return to the opera, nay, if I do not hide from the public eye, my life is in danger! First, I must send my mistress a message, then I must find out where she is staying. . . ."

"The devil," said Cino. "You work fast, Signor *mio!*"

"Then I must have a hiding place for myself, and tomorrow I must see her. All this you must arrange at once."

"I?"

"Certainly. You are the most intelligent man in Florence,

so I come to you. Moreover . . .” and Casanova with the thumb and two first fingers of his right hand made that swift and eloquent pantomime, which in Italy means “money”. The argument decided Cino.

“I can find you an excellent furnished apartment in Via dei Bardi—and take your baggage there from the inn. It is quiet, and your Excellency can spit into the Arno from the balcony of the *salone*.”

“Charming solace for a lover!” cried Casanova impatiently. “Now let me write a note, which you will deliver, and . . .”

But Cino’s head was making such strong negative signs that Casanova broke off, and looked at him enquiringly.

“In the first place, Excellency,” said Cino, who was lavish with the title now money was involved and promised, “I cannot carry love letters even for a friend and a gentleman. It would compromise my honour, and my neighbours would call me Cino the Pander. In the second place, notes tell tales, and there are angry swords in this tale. . . .”

“Then you refuse to help me?” said Casanova disgustedly.

“By no means. Tell me what you wish the lady to know, and I will be your Excellency’s ambassador. . . .”

Casanova blinked, stared, then burst out laughing, and in a minute the two rascals had their heads together plotting.

As for Henriette, she had sat out the opera in uncertainty and distress, not knowing what to think or hope or fear. She had planned this surprise for Casanova, with the anticipation of a child, expecting him to be in a fever of impatience at not having seen her all day on the promised 30th, and that he would come immediately to her box. There is perhaps no let-down in life quite so depressing as a long-planned “surprise” for a lover which goes wrong. So it was a sad and drooping Henriette who said a listless good night to her politely bowing escort, and then slowly climbed the ill-lighted stairs of an old palace to the floor she had hired as an apartment. So much absorbed was she in her own gloomy and perhaps angry thoughts that only an exclamation from her waiting-woman caused her to look up and see a man who had evidently been in hiding, now bowing to her.

"What does this mean?" Henriette asked. "What do you want here?"

"Only a word with you, lovely Signorina," said poor Cino, too unctuously for his purpose, bowing again with the flourish he had so often practised in private theatricals. Henriette frowned—the thought came to her that this posturing creature whose excess of perfume sickened the air was some Florentine lady-killer who had seen her at the opera and planned a conquest.

"Let me pass, sir," she said. "And never speak to me again!"

Before her anger and the fierceness of her address poor Cino recoiled, but instantly calling up the impudence of his fraternity, stepped up to the lady instead of away from her, and whispered:

"I have a password which will change your mind, Signora. It is—Giacomo."

"Giacomo!" Henriette looked startled, hesitating. "If you speak of the man I mean, why is he not here himself?"

"Ah, gracious Signorina, he would be here if he were not in danger. . . ."

"Danger!" Henriette turned pale. "Have they arrested him? Waylaid him?"

It was now Cino's turn to look startled, as he had not the faintest idea what the pretty lady meant—and by Bacchus! he told himself, Giacomo had a taste in pretty women.

"Give me a few minutes," he begged, "only a few minutes to explain to you the danger and dilemma of Signor Casanova. He himself begs you will listen to me."

Henriette, moving past him, knocked at the outer door of the apartment, and, as a servant opened it, ordered him to take the gentleman to the *salone*, then, turning to Cino, promised to join him in a few minutes. It was precisely at that moment that Cino, having greatly enjoyed the adventure up to this moment, began to regret having undertaken it. There was nothing particularly impressive about the apartment, since old palaces were even then frequently let out as apartments, and Cino as a wandering barber had often been in

them. What troubled him and made him forget the story with which he had been so carefully primed by Casanova was Henriette, a depth of sincerity and character in her which disconcerted him. Having already sized up Casanova and sentimentally approved him, Cino was expecting a wanton; instead of whom he came upon a wife.

He was in such confusion, in spite of the coolness he had often boasted of to Casanova, that for a moment he was totally at a loss what to say when Henriette hurried into the room. She had taken off her hat and cloak and had removed her diamonds, but was still dressed in the evening clothes she had worn to the opera.

"Now, sir," she said, seating herself with dignity, "I am ready to listen to you."

Describing his emotions afterwards, as he frequently did to anyone at his mercy with lather on his face and a razor at his throat, Cino would explain that for a moment he was dumbfounded by the strangeness of his situation, so that "memory and speech deserted me". They returned, it appeared, "in a flash" when Cino fortunately recollected that the future happiness of this exquisite creature and of "my eminent friend, the Cavaliere Casanova" depended upon the wits of him, Cino. Could a Florentine and a barber confess to the world that he had been abashed and tongue-tied?

"Madame," he said, pushing forward his right foot to make his bow, "I shall speak briefly. Signor Casanova has been expecting your Excellency all day, and was misled by a message. . . ."

"From whom?" Henriette interjected.

"From—I do not know whom—I have had so little time to learn these facts—but—in short he went to the opera and found himself in a box with an enemy!"

"Enemy? The lady I saw? I understood they were on the best of terms."

"It may have been so, Signora, but their present situation is as I say. To proceed—when Signor Casanova saw you so unexpectedly he started to his feet with the intention of joining you, as you must have seen. . . ."

"I certainly did see him make such a movement," Henriette said, "but why did he not come?"

"Ah!" exclaimed Cino, warming a little to his part, "see the devilish ingenuity of that she-serpent, that fiend, that enemy of the worthy Casanova! She was accompanied in the box by the most accomplished duellist in Tuscany—and it was instantly evident to the intelligence of Signor Casanova that she intended to provoke a duel in which he would be slain. It was therefore necessary for him to dissemble, and only by a clever trick was he able to escape their toils!"

"This is a very strange story, sir," said Henriette looking steadily at him, "and I confess I don't understand it. There are several obscure points. . . ."

"Ah, Madame," Cino interrupted vivaciously, "you are speaking of the past when the present and the future are so much more urgent and interesting! These points can be cleared up later by my excellent friend, who knows in detail what I know only in hurried outline. Meanwhile, as we discuss these matters, Signor Casanova's life is in imminent danger and . . ."

"In danger!" Henriette paled again.

"Certainly, and he requires—or I should say he begs—your aid both to avoid the danger and to save his honour."

"Mine! But how can I . . .?" Henriette began.

"Time presses," said Cino urgently, "you yourself must see that Casanova must instantly change his address so as to avoid receiving a challenge from the duellist, and at the same time remain in Florence so that he can always pretend that he did not leave to avoid fighting."

"But," Henriette objected, "this is not in accordance with the code of honour!"

"Ah, Madame," said Cino naïvely, shrugging up his shoulders in the way of his kind. "What do you expect? We are not heroes of Ariosto with dazzling shields and winged griffins to get the better of our enemies. We have to use the wits Providence has given us. For these and other sufficient reasons Signor Casanova has already left the inn—"

a friend of mine is removing his baggage—he will stay incognito in the Via de' Bardi and . . .”

“But this is not very dignified,” Henriette objected again.

“It is much better than being dead or even than escaping from Florence with a nasty story at his heels. Do you want him to be killed?”

“No, but . . .”

“There is no but, Madame. This is the only thing for him to do.”

“But what does he want me to do?” asked Henriette in perplexity.

“First,” said Cino, telling the points off on his finger, “to forgive him the careless folly which led him unawares into this trap.”

Henriette thought a moment, and then gravely bent her head in acquiescence.

“Second, that you will remain here for the present, but not communicate with anyone but Signor Casanova.”

Henriette again thought, and then said: “It will be a little difficult, but if much importance is attached. . . .”

“Signor Casanova attaches the greatest importance to it. He believes you will or may be in as much danger as he.”

“Very well then. Is that all?” And Henriette rose, with an evident desire to end the interview.

“There were many things Signor Casanova would have asked me to say if there had been time for him to confide them to me,” said Cino, remembering as he mouthed the sentence how he had played the part of a courtier with much applause from the apprentices of his quarter, “and many more that he alone can express to your Excellency. “Therefore . . .”

He paused dramatically, and Henriette stood expecting some quite terrific request or revelation.

“Therefore what?” she asked impatiently.

“Therefore,” said poor Cino lamely, conscious that he had led or rather misled the way to bathos, “he begs leave—to call on you tomorrow at whatever hour you desire after sunset!”

6

To say that Casanova's "heart beat faster" as he drove next night to call on Henriette is to make a statement the reverse of original in itself and a commonplace about Casanova. His heart always beat faster as he went to a first rendezvous with a woman, but in this case it was a beat with a difference. There was more of sentiment in it and less of carnality. He had desires to eternize himself in some admirable fashion—how, he was too agitated to specify—to make him worthy to lay Casanova-Caesar and his fortunes at her feet.

Certainly, the heart-beat was not due to Conte Giuseppe and his sword. Cino had reported to Casanova in his hiding place that no second had been sent to the inn or anywhere else, that the ring had been found and restored to its owner by a theatre cleaner, and that Donna Giulietta was going about as she had done on other days. Hearing this, Casanova began to think he had allowed himself to be intimidated too easily by the lady and her swordsman. After all, if a second had been despatched with a challenge, it was giving Casanova immediately the chance to reveal the real cause of Donna Giulietta's feelings of hatred and revenge—the last thing she wanted known. Her vengeance—and Casanova was now certain that she meditated vengeance—would be something more subtle, more secret and less straightforward than an arranged duel.

Nevertheless he wrapped himself and his beating heart in a large riding coat as a hired carriage lurched and bumped him through the dark streets of Florence. Those were the days when the Ponte Vecchio was closed to all traffic on summer nights, and people made up parties to dine and drink and strum music at tables set out under the starry sky. But it was still too early for that sort of thing, and Casanova only remembered the custom because the driver took him past to the next bridge to cross the Arno, and for a moment or two made him suspect some plot or ambush. Dismissing

the suspicion as absurd, Casanova returned to his former line of thought. Unlike his usual impudent self, relying for guidance on immediate inspiration he was wondering how he would behave, what he would say and do when he met her. He had already asked her to marry him; and it would be best, he thought, to proceed on that basis—if not as an accepted lover, then as one who fully intended to be.

Yet after all it was Henriette who decided the tone and the atmosphere of this meeting. When Casanova reached the apartment and gave his name to the servant through the little barred grating in the door, he was taken to a large *salone*, furnished with the relics of some princely household, and told that the Signora would join him immediately, if he would be good enough to wait. And wait he did for what seemed an irritatingly long time and was in fact nearly ten minutes. Woman-like, at the last moment Henriette had hesitations, wondering if she was doing the right thing in receiving a man whose designs on her were only too evident and whom she had encouraged in ways it was difficult to disavow. As for Casanova, he rapidly worked himself into a great heat of uneasiness, wondering on his side if this most elusive of females intended to elude him once more.

He was pleasantly startled from this most disagreeable of reveries by her voice, offering conventional excuses for keeping him waiting so long. Looking up quickly, Casanova beheld a sight which took his breath away, and started his heart beating faster than ever. Before him, not three paces away, was Henriette dressed in the simple flowered dress, without panniers or jewels, which ladies then wore in the intimacy of their own homes. It was really far more of a compliment than if she had been dressed and fortified, as it were, behind the stiff brocades and laces of formal dress. Yet this very simplicity and informality threw Casanova off his balance. The woman he had intended to brusque a little, to take in his arms and kiss, had in his imagination always been in full dress. For some reason he was intimidated—after all it was the first time he had spoken to her in women's clothes. And the planned kiss turned into a respectful bow,

and the possessive passionate words into ordinary courtesies.

"Sit down, sir," said Henriette taking a high-backed chair for herself, "we have much to say to one another."

"Much indeed," Casanova echoed, and then regaining some of his self-possession, "where are we to begin? In the Grand Canal?"

"We need not go so far back as that," Henriette answered smiling, "though be sure I shall never forget your . . ."

"It was clumsy of me to remind you of it," he admitted, "but the vanity of men is never sufficiently praised to their way of thinking, especially when their highest wish is to stand well with . . ."

"Ah, no compliments, I beg," Henriette interrupted in her turn. "You perhaps know, Monsieur Casanova, I have lived recently an adventurous and independent life, I have seen a little more of the world and its inhabitants than young women who spend their youth in the prison of a convent, and the rest of life in the prison of marriage. . . ."

At the word "marriage" Henriette coloured slightly, but Casanova hardly noticed it, having dashed off on a trail of his own.

"Marriage a prison!" he exclaimed reproachfully and with an eagerness to defend that institution which in him looked like impudence. "Say rather the foretaste of paradise, the . . ."

"Anything you like," she ended the sentence for him. "I shall not dispute. Yet I know that for many women marriage costs far more than it is worth. It is a disaster which is visited also on the children."

"Heavens!" said Casanova, whose plans were dashed by this uncompromising stand on behalf of virginity, for he did not make the error of supposing that this young Diana was advocating lighter ties. "Of whom can you be thinking?"

"Of my mother," said Henriette simply.

Casanova very nearly made a wry face at this. He had come to make love to the girl, and now they were discussing the uncongenial topic of her mother. Mothers are unavoidable and in some circumstances may be desirable, but are not

what a young man selects to lead up to the subject of subjects. He would have liked to divert her, and had indeed begun a half-hearted query about the Hungarian when Henriette, who had evidently been thinking hard and trying to arrange a complex of thoughts, began speaking, so preoccupied with what she had to say that she hadn't even noticed his words.

"I've got to tell you about her," Henriette said quietly but with intense concentration, looking beyond Casanova with fixed gaze as people do when they are trying to make old memories precise. "All that seems mysterious about me—or nearly all—this queer wandering life, being first in one place, then in another—then this last absurd adventure—being surprised by you disguised as an officer—none of it would have happened but for my mother's marriage. To you I seem an adventuress. . . ."

"Ah, no!" Casanova protested.

"Yes, and a wanton too, probably. . . ."

"I should not be sitting here, hanging on every word you say, if I thought that."

She waved her hand as if dismissing words he inevitably had to speak and she as inevitably to disbelieve, smiling a hurt smile which made Casanova flinch. He hated suffering.

"My mother was the only child of an old and wealthy, indeed very wealthy, family whose estates are scattered about in different parts of the Holy Roman Empire. My maternal grandfather and grandmother were very proud, very Catholic, very much wrapped up in themselves, and desolate to think that their seven-hundred-years name would disappear with their daughter's marriage. I think I won't tell you that name—it might be awkward, perhaps dangerous, if you spoke it in the wrong place. . . ."

She interrupted herself, seeing that Casanova looked restless, as if asking himself what all this had to do with him.

"Be patient," Henriette asked, "I have to tell you this for you to understand my life. I should not trouble you with it unless you . . ."

She broke off in some confusion, leaving Casanova hoping rather than deducing certainly that she had been

going to say something flattering his hopes and self-love.

"I am happy to listen for as long as you wish to speak," he said with an attempt at gallantry, "but nothing you tell me can alter my feelings for you."

She waved that aside.

"You know their kind—they exist in Italy, but in Germany and Spain they are stiffer and prouder and even less teachable by events. They intended to marry my mother to a distant cousin, who would take their name as well as child and money; but she . . ."

Tears started suddenly into her eyes, but she recovered and went on calmly enough:

"She fell in love with my father and knowing it was hopeless to ask her parents' consent, did the usual or unusual thing—eloped with him. Perhaps in some circumstances they might have forgiven her, for my father was a gentleman; but they could not forgive him for being a Protestant, and the Austrian Court could not forgive him for being French. He was of Provence, and Marquis d'Arci. And though I am now always called Henriette, my name is Anne d'Arci."

"And of course, her estates were confiscated by a frugal government?" Casanova exclaimed, and Henriette nodded. "Well," he went on, a bit impatiently, "all that is very disagreeable, no doubt, and hard on your parents, but how does it concern you? And if your parents were happy together they probably cared even less about it than you and I."

"They were very happy," said Henriette slowly, "especially at first. But then in time my father developed a fatal defect . . ."

"He went after other women?" Casanova guessed incautiously.

"That isn't men's only failing," Henriette retorted, perhaps a little cynically. "No, he fell into that other vice of the French nobility—he was never without a lawsuit. In the end they ruined him and broke my mother's heart, and her death broke his heart. And in short I was left alone with nothing but a few of my mother's diamonds and a few score acres of barren land near Arles. . . ."

Casanova was growing weary of this story, so usual and so tragic that he felt it must be true. Yet—what is the point of all this rigmarole, he asked himself. Is it to tell me she is a lady? Anyone can see that. Or to confess herself poor? Her diamonds are worth ten times my ducats, and however barren her French acres they are rich indeed compared with my share of Venice's empire of the sea! True or not, her tale tells me nothing.

"An unhappy affair indeed," he said aloud, and then with the hope that some general reflection might bring the talk away from these useless reminiscences and direct it towards themes he might lead in the sole direction which really interested him—love—he added: "Have you noticed how much more severely we are punished for imprudence than for meanness?"

But Henriette was not to be lured.

"I lived alone with an old governess and a few peasants until last year, when a message was brought to me from an old friend of my mother's. It said . . ." And at this point in her story Henriette hesitated for the merest fraction of a second before going on in a manner just a little different—almost infinitesimal events, yet enough to suggest to so alert and suspicious a listener that in some way or other she was altering the truth. "It said," she went on, calmly and smoothly enough, "that the old Emperor was dead, and the Empress though bigoted and prudish, might not be closed to compassion and even justice if rightly approached. Two powerful friends of my mother, the letter said, would help me, probably intercede for me—the Austrian ambassador in Venice, whom you, Monsieur Casanova, have met, and his colleague in Rome. . . ."

"Ah," Casanova was interested again, "you thought you might try to get back your mother's lands, or some of them, and so you came to Italy?"

"It seemed a hopeless wild-goose chase, but I was so weary of living alone in that empty ruinous old house, where the scream of the mistral in winter and the endless maddening *cri-cri, cri-cri* of the cicadas in summer nearly drove me mad.

In the morning I would go up to the top of a roofless turret and look over the olives and the vineyards to the bare jagged hills, and long for something to happen to me. And at evening, when the sun went down and I could see the towers and roofs of Arles black against the burning sky, I had the same longing. But nothing happened. The curé came, I went to Mass—my mother brought me up in her religion—one or two old friends of my father rode out to see me; but it was all monotony and sameness, no change, no hope. The letter seemed like a beacon light calling me.”

“Why, yes,” Casanova said gently, “I can understand that very well. But what has happened? Have you got anything but promises? What are you doing now? What do you intend to do in the future?”

Henriette laughed.

“Am I to answer all those questions in a word? Well, in a word, I have still to wait, and near my protectors, but there is hope.”

Casanova grimaced.

“Hope is the coin of rulers and of debtors who cannot be coerced,” he said cynically. “How long is it since you left France?”

“About—oh, several months,” she answered. Was Casanova mistaken, or was there again a slight hesitation, some faint lack of frankness? “But I was delayed. Mélanie—my old governess—was shocked at the thought of my travelling unchaperoned. And I had lived so sheltered a life. . . .”

“But you began by saying you had lived a life so adventurous and independent!” Casanova could not stop himself from saying it.

“Ah, I was speaking of recent weeks and months,” Henriette answered tranquilly. “Those who have been most sheltered learn most when alone and exposed to the world’s ways. Poor Mélanie! She insisted on coming with me, and I was glad of company, thinking in my ignorance that she might be a help to me. But she was too old for travelling, and everything she saw and heard disagreed with her,

reminded her of how much better the world was when she was young. She fell sick at Genoa. I did my best to nurse her, but she died. Then I felt I was really alone."

Alone. The word seemed to echo through the void of silence after Henriette stopped speaking. Casanova was not unmoved by its pathos. He saw the whole situation very clearly. True, in his time he had listened to some remarkably plausible stories from young women which later turned out to be mere masks for man-hunting, as he had cynically told himself might be the case as he listened to them. This case was different, but then Casanova wanted it to be different. There was really no slightest piece of evidence brought forward in corroboration, and the whole tale might have been an ingenious fabrication to account for the fact that he had seen her in Venice with von Schaumburg, on the road with a Hungarian captain, and in Florence with the Austrian attaché. It was the last fact which would have convinced Casanova if he had any doubts, which he did not choose to have—young diplomats do not show themselves in public places as escorts to women of doubtful reputation. Still, though much had been accounted for, there were still at least two points left unexplained. Why on earth had a respectable young woman travelled from Rome in male disguise with a man, and why after reaching Florence had she been absent for ten days?

All this flickered in Casanova's mind with that speed of thought which apprehends so much so quickly, but beyond and above these instinctive reckonings of the young man of the world, his heart yearned over her. Desire takes many forms with those who feel the need of self-deception, and perhaps this new tenderness was but a new refinement—a prettier mask for the age-old need of coupling in man and woman. As to Henriette—did he understand her? Did she understand herself? The rebellion of the eighteenth-century woman seethed but was still dumb and still revered the code which galled. Not yet had an Englishwoman, abandoned by an American lover, put into printed words the resentment and aspirations of herself and how many of her fellow women.

What a burden of needless conduct had been laid upon them by professional male celibates!

In the silence that had fallen between them something of this bitterness seethed unrecognized in Henriette—an “instinct” as we say (incorrectly) warning her that the man her impulses had chosen was selfish and instable. This foreboding she mistook for sadness at her parents’ fate, and self-pity seemed pity. Casanova, quick to detect the moods of others, noticed this access of melancholy and wondered at it. Yet he too recognized that their lives approached a crisis. After a first love-sight so decisive, and so many curious separations—“all her fault,” he brooded—they had at last met. But for what? Was it to be a duel of the sexes, or a duet? Vaguely but strongly he suspected that the upshot depended upon him, that what he felt, said, did, would now determine the loves and destinies of both. And Casanova, the lady-killer, was puzzled, uncertain what to say or do, baffled by a kind of woman he had not known, and self-frustrated by his own feelings which denied him, in the case where he most needed them, those skilled advances, those flattering mendacities which deceived him as well as his mistresses. By being in love, the master of love was rendered awkward and tongue-tied as a schoolboy.

“So I am here,” Henriette said, breaking the silence. “And what seems stranger, is that I am here with you. Tell me of yourself. I know so little of you. Rumour, gossip, the ‘warnings’ of old men. What is this danger your strange little friend told me about? Are you really in danger? And who is that woman you were with at the opera? She looks very beautiful, and seemed wildly in love with you. Is she your mistress?”

This frankness disconcerted Casanova, who was more accustomed to repelling innuendo and quieting jealousy, than replying to someone who merely asked for truth without finessing.

“Am I to answer all those questions in a word?” he asked laughing, retorting on her what she had said herself to his questions.

"It is the danger—can it be those Venetians were after you too? But that is impossible."

"Apropos," Casanova interjected, "who were they?"

"How should I know?" she shrugged. "There are cut-throats of all kinds. . . ."

"But how and why were Venetian footpads operating in Papal territory, in broad daylight, in an inn?"

"You know as much as I," she answered. "But I am assured they have not followed us here. Yet you come here disguised, by night, under an assumed name, and preceded by a wild tale from your friend whom I had great difficulty in talking to as I don't speak Italian."

"You understand it, though," said Casanova, noting for the first time that Cino had not complained of any difficulty in talking with Henriette. "As to my danger, it is real enough, and comes as Cino told you from Donna Giulietta."

"A mistress?"

"No, a woman who might have been, would have been, but for you."

"For me?" Henriette seemed to repel the insinuation. "But I don't know her. I never saw her until yesterday!"

"True," said Casanova, "but I had seen *you*. That is what made the difference. . . ."

It was a truth spoken humbly, for once, not a mere male compliment. For the first time in this difficult conversation he saw that he had touched her, and was as glad of that as of the complete possession of other women.

"But what danger have you to fear from a woman?" she asked casually, as if the self-evident answer must be that no woman is dangerous.

"I offended her in a manner no woman forgives unless she has abandoned hope and is starting for a convent."

"But can she really harm you?"

"Through others. She was mistress of—I had better not be specific—a man of power. More mysteriously she seems to have brilliant duellists at her orders. . . ."

"Ah!" Henriette looked troubled, and paled a little as when Cino had spoken to her of danger to her lover.

"You see? If I show myself here openly, how easy for one of them to pick a quarrel—it is done in the snapping of a toothpick. Even if I escaped one, another would follow. And much good would the world's indignation do me, lying in a bloody shroud!"

Perhaps he dramatized a little or too much—but where is the man who can resist making himself the centre of the world's stage to the woman he chooses to occupy it with him? He was quite unprepared for her manner of receiving his bit of male bravado, showing as she did such innocence, such a snow-white ignorance of male vanity which went far to disprove her boast of knowledge of the world. In her uneasiness she sprang from her seat and walked to the fireplace, where a few smouldering logs strove vainly with the chill of an Italian spring night.

"It is not what you think!" she exclaimed. "You may have offended her, but this danger, this persecution, comes because of me."

"Of you!"

"I have enemies."

Casanova was a little taken aback. Everyone has enemies, but this deduction of hers was plainly absurd, yet disquieting to him, as showing again that cloven of hoof of her mystery he wanted not to see.

"How can you say that?" he exclaimed, vexed. "When she came here she never knew of your existence. Until you appeared in your box and I betrayed so foolishly that I recognized you and that you meant much to me, she had never seen you!"

A curious look came over her, of shame such as people feel at their stupidity in betraying themselves unnecessarily. The colour flooded back into her face. Then, with a charming gesture, she stretched out her hand to him:

"Forgive me. I am foolish indeed, and full of self-importance, as you see! Of course, I have nothing to do with it. . . ."

At last a chance had come, and Casanova instantly took advantage of it. In a flash he had left his chair, had her hand in his and at his lips.

"Ah, Henriette—or should I say 'Anne'?" She shook her head. "Henriette You have everything to do with it, but not as you supposed. . . ."

"I am tired," she said, trying to withdraw her hand; "since we parted I have travelled far, I have been in danger, and I have been disappointed of what seemed a certainty. . . ."

"Let me help you to forget it."

She shook her head.

"I am committed too deeply," she said wretchedly. "Now I can't draw back. I may still hope."

"For what? And from what can't you draw back?"

"I have told you—I must try to recover those lands I have never seen—I promised my mother on her death-bed I would, if ever a chance came."

It was on the tip of Casanova's tongue to deliver some philosophic and republican epigram on the folly of old families, their pride, their possessions, their mania for survival; but he checked it as beside the point.

"Why not hope?" he said, drawing her to him. "Go on hoping that you may redeem your promise to your mother. Perhaps I can help you . . ." She shook her head a little mournfully, but did not meet his eyes, which were so eager to read hers. "Then," he went on, "beyond the hope, I offer you a certainty."

"A certainty! What certainty?" She looked at him questioningly.

"Love."

This brought the hot blood to her face and she bowed her head low and lower to avoid his gaze. She would have left him, but he did not need to use much strength to keep her near him, it was much even to hold her to his heart and put his lips on hers.

"Henriette!"

"Giacomo."

It was a swift hour of lover's minutes before they parted, with the time set for the next day's meeting. Yet as they lingered over farewells Casanova could not check one last question, useless and perhaps impertinent as he knew it to be.

"Tell me," he said, "why were you disguised and travelling with that Hungarian?"

Again there was that faint suspicion of hesitancy, yet she answered frankly:

"It was a woman's whim. He was under orders and I knew he was a blockhead who wouldn't find me out."

"Is that the only reason?"

"Well, I was rather weary of the attentions of your Italian countrymen to a woman travelling alone. There is no bore like an erotic bore."

Casanova left it at that. Yet as he jogged and rattled homeward in the cold carriage, he wondered. The explanation was very natural, but was it complete?

7

WHEN Casanova awoke next morning there was not a trace in his memory of suspicions and jealousies and conjectures—he had forgotten all about them. Curiosity about her and her past he might still feel, not because of doubting her or of uncertainty, but because he could not know too much about one he was sure would be his. "Would be"—that was the mood, not "is", in spite of that kiss and the many that had followed it. To halt at a kiss was unlike Casanova with whom love too often resembled a Caesarian operation of the "came, saw, conquered" kind. It was something new for this vigorous sensualist to pause and enjoy the lingerings of sentiment, although, as he himself writes, that evening with Henriette "had brought love to the point of frenzy". The frenzy was kept in control by his own instinctive tact which told him that to give it rein might be disastrous, and by some virginal quality in Henriette, some trace of the eternal Diana which was stronger in her than in most women of the time.

Perhaps it is not quite accurate to say that Casanova "awoke" for, if truth be told, he had scarcely slept that night, living over again in a golden world between sleep

and waking the delicious emotions and promise of happiness of the evening. True, much of their talk had been at arm's length, as it were, an almost formal exposition of her life by Henriette. But then Casanova instantly admitted to himself that his own jealous curiosity had forced her to such a confession—so blind she would have had to be to fail to see that he was determined to know. If she had not volunteered the explanation, would he not have demanded it?

He turned lazily in bed, wondering why he had been so intent on hearing the story, the suspicions and jealousies having vanished. Really all he had wished to know was whether there was another man in the case, and either Henriette was a marvellous dissimulator or there was none. Casanova's thoughts turned to the future.

Like most people who cannot take life simply, Casanova was a great hand at planning, notwithstanding the plain fact that his most elaborate and cherished plans were likely to be upset by some sudden impulse too faithfully obeyed. Life, he told himself importantly and without regret, must now become regular. In the eighteenth century people felt it virtuous if not essential to be or to persuade themselves that they were "regular", without inquiring too closely into the nature of regularity. It seemed then to connote a kind of classicism of conduct, something prudent and snug and smug, rather like what is now meant by being "secure".

It was highly necessary to be "regular" in order to marry Henriette and live happily. This could obviously not be furthered by a frustrated not to say disastrous career in the Church, while the military career urged by his Venetian friends looked most uninviting to one who looked forward to a life of uxorious regularity. Still, a married man must have a career, above all when his expectations are nil. Henriette, he thought, would probably disapprove of living by gambling—besides, that was not "regular" except in the sense that Casanova had never yet succeeded in staying away long from gaming places. He decided rather hurriedly to be "a merchant", a vague term which includes much, seems to promise opulence, and commits to nothing more

definite than a kind of Arabian Nights career. Unless, of course, his leisure were to be entirely occupied by managing Henriette's estates. He had a feeling they might turn out to be vast and lucrative—that is, when they were recovered.

This important point settled, Casanova was about to proceed to others when a knock on the door preceded the dapper figure of Cino, who had come to shave his patron. Putting aside further plans—which he foresaw might be numerous and changeable, for Henriette must be consulted—Casanova wrapped himself in a dressing gown, and prepared for lather and razor. It was evident from Cino's manner, his air of importance, his pursed-up lips and frown, his breakings off of sentences and self interruptions, that he was bottling up with difficulty some piece of news he thought important.

In his good humour and mood of general benevolence to all who inhabited the same world as Henriette, Casanova was ready and willing to listen to any nonsense with due gravity; but evidently Cino meant to keep his news to himself as long as superhuman efforts could prevent a born gossip from blurting it out. Meanwhile as he worked up the lather, he chattered of important nothings of the day—the health of the Grand Duchess, the hideous propaganda stories still circulating against the defunct Gian Gastone de' Medici to reconcile the people to a foreign ruler, the chance that there would be more rain, the arrival of a celebrated preacher, the discovery of a headless antique statue in a vineyard near Mugnone, the picnic and visit to Poggio arranged yesterday by Donna Giulietta. . . .

"Ah," Casanova at last interrupted the unceasing flow of chatter, "and what other news have you of that fascinating and fatal siren?"

"Tomorrow she leaves Florence," said Cino.

"What!" Casanova jerked himself upright to the complete oversetting of Cino's lathering plans. "Are you serious? Where is she going?"

"It is a secret," said Cino importantly, "but wise men guess she will leave in the direction of Bologna."

"Wise men?" cried Casanova impatiently. "And who are

they? You and your neighbour, Martino, I suppose.”

“And why not, signor?” retorted Cino, much hurt. “Are we such dolts that in times of need we cannot come to the aid of some who think themselves wiser than we?”

Casanova laughed, and lay back in his chair for Cino to continue. This was important news indeed, and Casanova turned it over and over in his mind trying to think of some explanation for a step so unforeseen, and so convenient to him. Could it be that she had learned of his visit to Henriette, and in consequence had given up hope? But hope of what? Of vengeance? Or, as Casanova now began rather riskily to flatter himself, of regaining him as a lover? It was the latter, he decided, and of course these donkeys were wrong about Bologna—that was a rumour put out to hide the fact that she was returning to Rome. And on the whole a good riddance, he thought, though she had a fine figure and striking eyes. . . .

“Did the wise men discover why Donna Giulietta has decided to leave the City of the Red Lily?” he asked ironically, and, not waiting for an answer, added: “Cino, my friend, I need your aid to get together the finest flower-bunch this city affords.” The second half of the speech did not atone for the error of the first, for irony is a figure of speech repulsive to the people who dread it as a weapon they have never learned to handle. If Casanova had been himself—but who that is the prey of Venus is wholly himself?—he would not have made the blunder, or, having made it, would have instantly atoned. Cino, perhaps, “wise man” or not, might have something to tell, some hint perhaps, a warning even. But Casanova neither observed nor repaired his slight to his friend’s vanity, never noticed that Cino left unanswered the interesting (because of ten per cent commission) query about flowers. Not till Casanova had exhausted his eloquence on the topic of roses, with rhymed Italian quotations from Horace and Ausonius, did sulky Cino consent to speak. He agreed to find the flowers, and, the shaving ordeal being ended, received with bows a ducat for the flowers and another, more princely, for himself. Cino was not grateful—Italians are

never grateful—but as a philosopher rejoiced that money parted from a fool had joined a wise man. He was melted a little, and at the doorway halted to say:

“Signor Giacomo, Donna Giulietta is not to be trusted. . . .”

“Indeed I’m of your opinion” cried Casanova gaily, too gaily, for it was evident that he attached no importance to what was perhaps meant as an invitation to repair the insult of scorning a wise man.

Cino shrugged, and took himself off, leaving Casanova to delightful self-congratulations and plans for the future—seriously meant plans—that made the roseate pastoral dreams of life with Marietta the second sound drab and realistic. It was the background, the distance, the more remote future of these plans which fringed that country which is common to the lunatic and the lover. The immediate plans were at once more precise and more sensible—in spite of last night’s kiss and the lovers’ unreportable (because purely emotional and therefore nearly senseless) words which followed, Casanova was well enough aware that Henriette was but half wooed and won. Like a beautiful young filly who lets herself be coaxed to the hedge with apples and soft words, and gazes at the strange flatterer with wide brilliant eyes, she had coaxed herself to Casanova with her own dreams and hopes and female needs—but as the one will start and rear at a careless gesture and scamper away with wild hoofs throwing up the black turf, so would the other start and sheer away—disappear probably, with complete success—if sought too brusquely, domineered in any way, or frightened from her dream lover by too actual a man.

Of course, she had heard he was a rake, he knew that, and reckoned it among his amorous assets—she would want to reform him, or, shall we say, monopolize his rakishness for herself alone. Such is the indomitable conceit of mankind that he counted less on this than on being loved for his own sake. Yet how could she do that, she who knew practically nothing of him, save that he had a strong arm and a clear eye, a leg which deserved the tight-fitting hose of earlier days, and a

reckless submission to impulse which looked like the uncalculating passion women think they worship? Strong in that belief he scaled a height of bliss he had never before even sighted on the far horizon.

Yet at the very outset he was met by a difficulty in the mere mechanics of wooing—the restaurant did not then exist, so that he could not invite her to a meal over which good will might grow, and love sprout hardier wings. Tavern and coffee-house he judged unworthy; a cook in his or her apartment—some day but not yet. Once again it was Cino who suggested the solution.

Early in the afternoon Casanova, dressed with unusual but not oppressive splendour drove up to Henriette's in a smart carriage driven by a groom in somebody's livery—hired through the influence of a barber. It was of course too early in the year for roses—not even the Grand Duke had them in his glass houses—but when Casanova entered the room its sweetly scented air told him how Cino had solved the problem of the “finest flower-bunch in Florence.” Every corner of a table and piece of furniture that would hold a vase was brilliant with the spring flowers—heavily scented freesias and hyacinths, wild narcissus from the hills, anemones from the open spaces, white and purple violets from hedgerows, and the tiny wild cyclamen. He was looking at them with that peculiar pleasure we feel in giving another what we should never afford ourselves, when Henriette came in wearing her hat and out-door clothes with a great bunch of his white violets pinned to her coat.

He had the wit to kiss her hand, and not to claim her lips. He was rewarded by the offer of a smooth cheek, and without rebuke ventured the voyage to her mouth which claimed too hopefully would certainly have been refused. Not Caesar, when his favourite legion had won him an impossible victory, was more elated than Casanova by this petty triumph, at whose sentiment in another he would have freely jeered.

“The flowers!” exclaimed Henriette, breaking from him before her lips were warmed. “Where did you find them? And so many! So beautiful! That queer friend of yours, who

brought them, said you had chosen them yourself. He quoted poetry to me. Who is he?"

"A barber"

"A . . . ? You are joking?"

"By no means," said Casanova, not averse from a chance to brag of his country. "In Venice the gondoliers, in Florence the barbers, in Rome the very street-walkers quote poetry—by the way, it is all that a civilised Europe has not stolen from us or destroyed. We live, you know, by showing our ruins, as other beggars their sores. . . ."

He had run on beyond his theme and beyond the note he had meant to hit.

"You are bitter. Is Italy so miserable?"

"We shall not speak of it since you are here," he said with exaggerated gallantry, to bridge the chasm of feeling made by his own error. "It is time to start," he added, drawing her to the doot, and feeling that by repetition of the century-old complaint he had defrauded himself of praise for his lavish flower-giving.

It was to Fiesole they drove, not to the Cascine—an impious break with tradition. Cino had a friend there—wise man indeed, he had useful friends everywhere, and in the garden of this friend they found wine and fruits and solitude under trees and an immense vista over dome-crowned Florence and the vale of Arno, with range upon range of purple mountains beyond. It was not the habit of that age to care for such things, the human eye had not been educated to see or the human spirit to respond to the unbought glory of the world. Unlike men to-day they valued only what was paid for, but had no mania for destroying all they could not understand because a superior might enjoy it. Cino suggested the garden for the practical reason that it brought them together without alarming the caution of eighteenth-century decorum. Despite the fact that Henriette had outraged that decorum by travelling the roads without a male relative and in male disguise, Casanova elected to treat her as if she had newly emerged from the cocoon of a convent.

Indeed, there were moods and modalities to the aesthe-

ticism even of the delicate lovers of the nineteenth century, and at such a period of their passion even they might have neglected the landscape for each other. It is certain that Henriette and Casanova did so. The wine and fruit remained on the table—for the fruit was but pears saved from last year's crop—as untasted as the blackbird in the blossoming cherry tree above them remained unheard. He had taken one of her hands in his, and the other, still gloved, rested on his shoulder, while her head was turned away from him, as he talked the divine nonsense of lovers. He said her eyes were like stars and her lips like flowers, he said that when she spoke it was music, and that the touch of her hands was magical. He said he had never loved anyone else, and never would. He said he had fled to Rome and devoted himself to the priesthood in sheer despair at the thought of never seeing her again. He said that while he was a philosopher, he could not help seeing the action of Providence or, more philosophically, the irrevocability of destiny in the fact that he had looked out of the window in Rome as she was passing by and that at just that moment she had removed her mask to take the *confetti* from her hair.

"Yes, yes," she agreed. "But how was it you were in that upstairs room during Carnival?"

The question was innocently asked, but with all its innocence smote Casanova a blow. Only that morning, among his other utopian musings, he had promised himself that he would never tell her an untruth; and since morning Donna Giulietta had been so absent from his thoughts that it was as if she ne'er had been.

"I was there for my sins," he said, quibbling outrageously. "And an impulse sent me to the window to close the shutter. . . ."

"Why?"

"I suppose there was too much glare of light—and then I saw you, my beloved, and . . ."

"How can you love me as you do, after only such glimpses of me, and then travelling with that idiot Hungarian, oh, and seeing me in bed like that, as if . . ."

Casanova hardly heard what she was saying, as he filled his lungs with a deep gust of air laden with the spring scents. He had got over that most awkward of moments, without having to confess the truth yet without telling any very conspicuous lie. Somehow he felt intensely grateful to Henriette for not having pursued him with more questions. What was she saying. . . . ?

"The Hungarian?" he said vaguely. "Ah, yes, a foolish fellow, but not without courage. How did you happen to meet him?"

Now was Henriette's turn to feel a difficulty in answering a simple question asked without any particular reason.

"Through friends in Rome," she answered after the briefest hesitation. "Didn't I tell you—he carried despatches, and it seemed a good idea to make him escort me without knowing it?"

"But," said Casanova, searching his memory, "didn't you say the despatches were more important than he thought, and that you were responsible for getting him safely to Florence?"

"Did I?" Henriette's eyes were guileless. "I feel I oughtn't to be made responsible for that or for anything I said on that mad journey. It seems now like a not very credible dream, as if it happened to someone else. . . ."

"So it did," cried Casanova, "Henriette in a soldier's uniform is a totally different person from Henriette in this charming dress."

He put his arm around her waist, and coaxed her to stroll with him under fruit and olive trees to the walled edge of the garden. They stood there on an old terrace, built long ago, centuries perhaps, for some merchant or scholar of old Florence who liked to escape from the stench and riots of the city to pure air and a wider horizon. As the day blazed to its close with vast crimson clouds piled at the sky's edge, city and valley were dyed deeper and deeper in that violet twilight which so many have described since with such enthusiasm. But to these children of the eighteenth century the symphony of natural colours and shapes hardly existed. If they felt anything of the scene's influence it was that softening

of the heart so many generations have felt at the daily death of the world's light. From Henriette's silence and his own feelings Casanova knew that they had reached a climax in their lives. It was strange he thought that there was no need to say anything—it was enough for them to be together.

Presently he bent his head down to hers, and found that, as if by curious intuition, she was lifting her face to his; and their lips met.

A week, ten days passed in these and similar excursions at once innocuous and solitary. To anyone who had known him in his conquering past the Casanova of these days would have seemed as abnormal as a fish living tranquilly in a wheat field. Was he moonstruck that he was content to trifle away these spring days, with all Tuscany a blaze of wild flowers and the birds singing by day and the frogs croaking mellifluously by night, rewarded by no more than kind glances, soft words, and kisses that were too sisterly tender for passion? Letters came to him from friends in Venice, and he read them as distantly as a man who had by accident sailed into the Fortunate Isles of the everliving might read a bundle of letters from the harsh wrangling world. They went unanswered. The gaming table called to him, and that siren went for once unheard. Casanova considered himself a reformed character and plunged deeper into the bliss of heart-to-heart, unaware that he was returning on his erotic tracks, so to speak, enjoying what he had been too impatient and too much of a realist to know earlier. It was a sign of how serious he was, and of how much he was enjoying the experience, that he would not have minded who laughed at him.

There was nothing particularly surprising in the fact that Casanova was lavish in this affair—he always was—yet he set a new record even for his extravagance in the clothes and flowers and other gifts he showered on Henriette, in spite of her protests and sometimes impatience.

"I can't help it," he said by way of apology, and spoke the truth. It is the Nemesis of the convinced materialist that he can only express his emotions materially. 'Dante once

prepared to paint an angel'—but Casanova? No. Yet he too, in his own fashion, granted the limitations of his temperament and the fetters of his age, touched lips with immortality, and, if he had had the world to lose, would gladly have lost it for her sake. /

It was Cino, good-natured Cino, who by the stern nod of Fate was so nearly a pander that he stood unnaturally upon his honour over trifles—it was Cino who all unwittingly put an end to the sweetest days of Casanova's life, or rather startled him from the dream of perfect love and launched him back into the river of realities. Cino, importuned to think of yet another decorous solitude where the couple could play Daphnis and Chloe before the fall, suddenly bristled with denial. The Italian temper flared, the Italian voice boomed petulantly, as he ticked off vehemently on finger and thumb the innocent—but were they so innocent? he sneered—rendezvous he, Cino, citizen of Florence, had contrived for them, merely to oblige a friend (he forgot the ducats), and thereby risked reputation with his neighbours.

"Fiesole, Galluzzo, La Romola . . ." he spared his patron not one of the names of outlying suburbs, now for Casanova for ever haloed. And then, bringing Casanova plump into love as lived, he added naïvely: "Why does not the Signore find the Signora a pretty house or an apartment—*where they could live together like Christians!*"

"*Come Cristiani*"—the word meaning, for these eternal pagans of Etruria, not a godly folk committed to myteries and ten irksome commandments, but simply Plato's featherless bipeds, Man and Woman.

Casanova stared, as we do when wisdom, or what seems like it, springs unasked from the lips of those we have unwisely thought less knowing than ourselves. 'Why not?' he asked himself, and Cino's question, shot off in a moment of irritation because he couldn't think of anywhere else to suggest, became as insistent in Casanova's inner hearing as the call of the cuckoo in spring. The thought which went with it, like the second inevitable note of the undomestic bird's call, was: She'll never bed with you till you shift her

from present quarters. There was doubtless truth in that, the mere rooms with a door and a woman servant waiting somehow built themselves into a sanctuary for Henriette, perhaps not altogether to her content. But as long as she had a room of her own, so long would she continue to feel the compulsion—however unwelcome—to sleep there alone. Casanova saw it, as he believed, in a flash of inspiration. What a ninny he had been! Trifling with kisses and flowers and breathed vows at sunset and silent hand-in-hand under blossoming trees instead of wedding her body to his! It is thus, he reflected but not perhaps as wisely as he believed, that men lose the woman of their hearts.

He entered into Cino's project with exemplary enthusiasm, and Cino, scenting rich percentages, blessed his own lucky genius for the thought, and urged his patron to greater efforts and costlier extravagances. For three days Casanova laboured at this nook of paradise-to-be, ably seconded by Cino and a drove of bull-necked Florentine workers, urged to unusual efforts by limitless firkins of Chianti and strings of raw sausage stinking of garlic. The honest souls repined unfeignedly when they finished (too soon, alas) the job for the fool so conveniently to be parted from his money. They shook his hand and wished him, perhaps needlessly, "good appetite" as they left. Cino followed them, and Casanova, sinking cheerfully into a luxurious chair, contemplated his handiwork with content, and lost himself in dreams even more luxurious than the chair.

It is interesting, perhaps instructive, perhaps alarming, to realise how swiftly even an illicit title of possession to a man brings a woman acquainted with him so intimately that she knows at once when he has a secret. The secrets of the past she may not know or guess or want to guess—her practicality wiping out as so much dead stuff the life he lived before he was hers—but a new secret will startle her instinct as surely as the scent of game will trouble a trained spaniel. For three days Henriette was uneasy, her own bright dream tarnished by fears that "something" might happen—he was already tired of her, he had found out something about her, there was

another woman, he had never really loved her, she was not good enough for him, and so on, in an endless chaplet of alarmist possibilities.

She was relieved then in a way, yet braced for an unhappy and perhaps strenuous experience—already she had determined to fight for him to the last cartridge of the last battalion—when he called on her, and with an uncommonly ceremonious and constrained air begged her to accompany him. Where? He would show her. For what purpose? That would be revealed. Was he displeased with her? He smiled, and shook his head enigmatically, but made none of the strenuous denials she hoped for and indeed expected.

This is the end, and so soon! she thought to herself piteously, feeling sorry for poor Henriette and all unhappy women who give their hearts once and for all to men with splendid legs and a gleam in their eyes. She had hoped . . . what had she not hoped? And to die a virgin after all! Yet as the horse clip-clopped over the street and the carriage rattled, swaying them together and apart by its motion as if it were rehearsing in trivial symbolism the caprices of Venus, there was little but her fears and alarms, his aggravatingly silent air, and a new gleam in his eye to warn her that something was afoot. They crossed a bridge, which opened to them the road leading to the Porta Romana, but Henriette judged her worse suspicions confirmed, when the carriage diverged sharply from that now familiar route, negotiated several narrow alleys and sharp corners with gruff “Ohé” from the driver, and at length drew up sharply and with a bit of an air of display in front of what was then a modern and fashionable building.

Henriette looked at Casanova, and Casanova looked at Henriette. He said, simply: “Shall we get out?”

There was a gleam in his eye as he said this, which to Henriette’s alarmed fancy, had something of the satyr about it. Yet—must it be confessed?—upon the whole this revelation of the beast in man rather calmed than frightened her. It is a seduction-rape, she thought—over-dramatically; and her heart beat with that acceleration felt by every law

recruit when for the first time he hears the solemn thunder of the guns of battle and knows his turn has come.

"Are we visiting here?" she asked pleasantly.

"If you will do me the honour," he answered, with a formality she thought over-done, as indeed it was, for nervousness always leads to some piece of exaggeration in behaviour.

He stepped out through the low door, opened for him by the groom, and gave his hand to her as she shepherded her elaborate clothes through the same opening and triumphantly kept them free from the least touch of mud.

"Are they friends of yours?"

The question was a natural one, but Casanova did not answer. He hurried her up the outer steps, opened the door himself—which startled her—led her up some inner stairs, unlocked another door, bowed her forward, and she found herself walking through the drawing room she would have liked, into the boudoir she coveted. She turned to him, seriously, for explanation, and saw his face brilliantly lit by the smile of one who intends to please another—or at worst, hopes to do so—by pleasing himself at the same time. There was no need really for any explanation. The sinister fog of fears bred by suspicion of his having a secret, even the not wholly abhorred suspicion of some determined attack on her sex, instantly vanished.

"You got it for us," she said, turning quickly to him, her eyes bright with pleasure. No eloquence or glittering poetry of words could have pleased Casanova more than those commonplace words, given the tone of voice with which they were spoken; the gestures; the eyes and face lighted up. Indeed, seldom is the language of lovers beautiful or even mildly rational outside the conventions of literature. The poetry of love is as papery thin as humanity's veneer of civilization.

So far as words went, Casanova did not need to hear more, except for the pleasure of listening to the most charming voice in Italy. They told him that the—for him—unwonted experience of waiting patiently in Love's ante-rooms was

ended. He did not have sense enough to regret it, or to note that the usual fluctuating fever of his desire for a woman had in this case burned steadily. They told him, too, that she accepted the arrangement, without even giving herself the luxury of being persuaded to do what she wanted to do. Perhaps the fright of "he has a secret which he is keeping from me" had warned her that the most confident of female anglers may overplay her prize fish. Besides, she had the South in her.

Words, though useless, must nevertheless serve to express feelings.

"You like it?" he asked, hungering for her praise.

"So this was your secret," she said, speaking her own thought, rather than answering his question.

"Secret?" he asked, a little perplexed.

"I felt sure these past days there was something you were hiding from me."

He laughed gaily, flattered by the implied interest in him, overlooking the fact that so penetrating a mental gaze into his thoughts might be inconvenient in a wife, though perhaps unavoidable. He took her in his arms, and for a while their words once more lapsed into the jargon of lovers.

"It is getting late," she said sensibly at last, gently freeing herself. "I must go back. . . ."

"You must never go back," he interrupted.

"No?" she enquired. "But my clothes? And Rinalda?"

Rinalda was the woman she had found to look after her in Florence.

"She will be here soon," said Casanova, looking at his heavy Genevan watch. "Cino is bringing her, when she has packed up."

"You thought of everything," she said, and then, "you must be patient with me. I have not lived before with a man."

"Nor I with a woman!" he asserted.

"What!" even her love could not swallow that preposterous statement.

"It is true," he protested. "I have slept with women. I have found places where I could make love to women. But I have never wanted to live with a woman."

"I hope you will not weary of it," she said with a touch of pathos which made him wince. He stifled the thought and her misgivings with kisses.

Like those nations, who, having no history, are gratuitously supposed to be happy, these happy people had no history—for a time. They lived a life which, to those who had never been in love or had forgotten that state of monomania, would have seemed either unprofitable or monotonous, according to whether they worshipped money or the petty amusements called pleasure. They went to bed early and rose late; they made excursions and bought small things that amused them; they told each other all they remembered of their childhood and youth, and then remembered perhaps more than had happened in their desire to be frank and entertaining; they planned different sorts of felicities in different sorts of places every other day; and preferring each others' company to that of any other person known or imagined, they found their lack of other company a blessing rather than a lacuna.

They were perfectly happy, and they had no history.

Sometimes indeed a chance remark would recall to Henriette her yet unaccomplished plan of regaining through the influence of old family friends the estates which should have been hers—at least, so Casanova understood the situation. He could not understand why any mention of it always made her look sombre and apprehensive. On his side, there was a worry, too, a more tangible and earthy worry, one which disturbs sooner or later the peace and rejoicing in each other's bosom of nine couples out of ten. Casanova was running out of money.

From these two facts, their history began again, and history always means errors and sufferings, if not downright crimes and miseries.

For a reckless fellow following his impulses with a freedom which would make the scanty hair stand hideously erect

around the bald pate of Mr. Moneyed Prudence, Casanova had an odd streak of forethought—or shall we say a tendency to sidestep the disasters which almost invariably overtake his type? He made a pact with himself—when he was down to his last hundred gold pieces, he would take them to the gaming table and win.

He did so; and lost.

This was an awkward situation, to put it in its rosiest aspect, and might be absolutely fatal to the idyll. Yet Casanova kept a hold on himself, seemed to those about him to have stopped play because of a run of bad luck, joked, took a pinch of snuff, and strolled laughingly from the place with a promise thrown over his shoulder to be back soon.

The night cold smote him unkindly as he stepped from the over-heated rooms, and he perceived with dismay another unexpected misfortune. It was raining, and he hadn't enough money left to hire a modest coach to keep him dry. He thought of Henriette, asleep perhaps in their bed, or more probably awake and reading to pass the time till he returned, or awake and thinking of him. He could see in his mind's eye her face and thick clustering curls on the pillow, and stood a moment thinking of her with a mixture of pain and happiness so poignant that he forgot the cold rain pellets beating on his face.

What was to be done? There was no Bragadin, no Marco, to run to for a gift or a loan. Scarcely indeed would he dare to write the Senator for another loan, not having acknowledged the last, while numerous questions for the oracle of Solomon's Key had been left unanswered. Except Cino, he knew nobody in Florence who would lend him a ducat; and he was reluctant to borrow there, more from vanity than any superior motive. He might walk home, confess to Henriette, pawn one of her diamonds and try his luck again. . . .

He had his idea now. Tying a handkerchief over his cocked hat, he splashed through the rain to a pawn shop, raised five gold florins on his watch and hurried back to the gaming table.

"Raining," he said, in answer to one or two glances of surprise and curiosity, "I'll wait till it clears."

Wait he did, watching the game closely, intently, and then, as if bored with himself and the drag of time, threw down a coin apparently at a venture, actually with all his brain alert and calculating. As soon as he had won ten pieces, he stopped, wrote a little note to Henriette to say that he had met friends and would be home late—she was to sleep. This note he gave to a servant of the house with some money, and directions to deliver it at once. Then he returned to the table, and forgot everything in desperate concentration. . . .

Dawn was greying over the ancient town when Casanova stepped once more from the gaming house into the street. The rain was over, and paling stars in a pellucid sky gave promise of a brilliant blue day to come. Casanova did not notice it. He looked haggard, and from long sitting his legs were cramped and stiff and his sides ached. Now was the moment when it would be pleasant to lie back in the *felze* of a gondola and move smoothly and noiselessly over calm water, while he fingered the two hundred or more florins he had won! But to be shut up in a hired carriage reeking of the stable and to be jolted through chilly streets—no, he would walk.

By the time he reached their square the eastern sky was red, and the morning birds were calling and quarrelling. Opening the door, he moved noiselessly into their bedroom, meaning to kiss the sleeping Henriette, and then doze in an arm-chair until she awoke. If he startled her by appearing like the unheralded apparition of himself, he was no whit less astonished and troubled to find her sitting up—in nightdress and robe by a burned-down candle, pale, with dark blue shades of sleeplessness under her eyes. But the moment she recognized him, the woebegone expression left her face, and it flushed with new life as she threw herself into his arms, shaken with a passion of weeping.

"My treasure! My heart! My adored!" Casanova poured out the facile treasury of Italian endearments to quiet her, but he was touched to the heart to find himself so unfeignedly

beloved, even if it was to the point of inconvenience. "You should have slept. Did you get my letter? Why did you sit up? Did you mistrust me? Are you ill?"

She shook her head, unable to control herself and then put back her head, looking at him through her tears. There was something in the look which made Casanova uneasy, not so much with the remorse of the debauching husband, as with a new, sudden fear he seemed to catch from her. To sooth her and himself he once more ripped out his facile endearments, once more tried to justify himself by his letter.

"The letter came, and it was good of you to send it," she said, recovering herself, "but, you see, I didn't believe it."

Casanova stared at her unhappily, aghast at this obvious penetration.

"You didn't believe it "

"No. I thought . . . Oh, I was foolish," she interrupted herself. "Let me get you some coffee. You must need it after . . ."

"No," he said vehemently, pulling her back to him, "tell me first what you thought? That I was with another woman?"

It was now Henriette's turn to look at him unhappily, but with her it had another root.

"A woman?" she answered slowly, with a sort of beautiful arrogance. "I never thought you would want another woman. Did you?"

"No " he said again, vehemently, but joyously this time, as he threw a couple of heavy purses on the table. "There are my night's earnings! I started playing—lost everything—pawned my watch, which by the way I must redeem—and came away a winner. I didn't mean to tell you. I know . . ."

He had meant to say: "I know you despise gamblers," in the tone people use when they are defending something they do and mean to imply "of course I think your objections ridiculous". Instead he broke off and watched her, as she moved to the table and stood, a slender figure, touching the gold hesitatingly.

"It isn't that," she said, and then as if with difficulty added,

"I thought you had been made to write the letter, and that you were in danger."

"In danger!" He was almost scornfully astonished. "What sort of danger? From whom?"

"From . . . such as those men at the frontier. I am always in dread they may follow us here and . . ."

"What nonsense!" cried Casanova gaily, "a long night alone has filled your head with goblins. Get us some coffee—that'll drive them away."

She moved silently to obey him, but in the droop of her head, the listlessness of her walk—so unlike her usual vitality and gaiety—he saw, or thought he saw, something sinister, threatening. It was his turn to feel rather than know that a secret was being kept from him. He watched her from the room, then walked to the window and pulled the curtains wide open. Early morning sunlight flooded the room, seeming to destroy in a flash the miseries and mistrusts of the night. With a shrug of his broad shoulders, Casanova threw into forgetfulness the vague fears which a minute before had weighed upon him.

Was this the first imperceptible rift in their love affair? If either in secret asked the question, neither voiced or hinted it. To all intents their seemingly endless honeymoon shone on, untroubled by the storms which make the first year of marriage the most contentious. Yet in the very eagerness with which they enjoyed each other, the very willingness of both to yield, there was something of apprehension, some too morbid sense that "Time's winged chariot" was hurrying away the sweet days and nights.

It was not long before Casanova had to return to his gambling again. He felt and said he needed money, and indeed he had spent more lavishly than ever since that wakeful night; yet it may be that he was wearying for the excitement. Moreover a fresh outlet presented itself, a more convenient and almost certainly more lucrative gambling set than that gathered at the old place. Rumours had been clacking out the tale that Padua was sending them a company of its celebrated character actors, the inheritors of the old-

fashioned *commedia dell'arte* who still fought bitterly and on the whole successfully against the theatrical reforms of Goldoni. Then newspaper puffs and bills on the theatre announced their coming more certainly. Casanova looked forward to them eagerly—another slight intimation perhaps that the adventurer in him was wearying of the gardens of Armida—and regretted that their dialect would make them incomprehensible to Henriette.

Two days before the opening of the comedy, he met at the gambling den one of the actors, as inveterate though by no means so skilled a gambler as Casanova. This actor, known as Il Mosca, "the fly", seemed to take an immense fancy to Casanova; and, as they left the gambling room together, asked for a private talk in the back room of a wineshop. Casanova naturally took him to a friend of himself and Cino, not far from the Piazza, and the Mosca (whose nose by the way was reddened by other liquids than theatrical paint) soon came to the point—would Casanova join him in setting up a bank for play among the actors and their friends during their stay in Florence?

"It's profitable," the Mosca went on earnestly, "I've proved it myself, so long as the man controlling the bank knows what he's about. I wasn't ten minutes watching that table before I saw you were the man I wanted. Look here, if you'll put up five hundred, I'll put up a thousand, and we'll share and share alike."

"But," Casanova naturally objected, "do your colleagues earn enough and play enough to make it worth while. . . ."

"Small pickings from them," the Mosca said contemptuously, "just enough to keep the bank going. Some of them can't resist a green table and a pack of cards. But you've overlooked the real beauty of the thing. We've got pretty girls among our actresses, including a new recruit, a stunner if ever there was one—not an actress you know, a country girl who ran off from her husband. *Per Bacco*, she's pretty! I shouldn't mind a night with her myself. But you see, my friend, there are bound to be droves of the rich young men round them, hoping to make a kill, you know, with lots of

money all ready to be coaxed out of their pockets into ours. I'll square the girls to make some of them play, and with you holding the bank, we'll double our money, or I'm a gutted flat-fish "

Casanova hesitated, evaded, pretended he wanted time to make up his mind. He knew perfectly well that though Henriette silently tolerated his usual gambling, she would be revolted by a plot of this kind which had something underhanded about it. On the other hand, the players at the gambling room had got to know him by this time, and most were so wary of him that his winnings had dropped in a disquieting way. Here was the chance he had been wanting without daring to hope; and it would be easy enough, while keeping close enough to the rules of the game to avoid any charge of cheating, to take plenty of money away from young men flurried with wine and jockeying each other for positions with the actresses.

Of course, he accepted.

This left him with the problem of how to adjust matters with Henriette. He solved it by taking her to the first night and telling her that he was going to a supper party with some of the actors—a male party only.

And Henriette, happy to think that he would have some companionship after their isolated life, welcomed the idea.

"This time I shall not sit up worrying over your safety," she said, smiling a little wistfully.

He explained a little too volubly and repetitiously just why he couldn't take her. She noticed, but gave no sign. He saw her to a coach, kissed her hand, and after she drove away joined the Mosca behind the curtain. Him Casanova found still in his stage clothes, removing the grease paint, and highly elated both by the stage success of the company and by hopes of large winnings from the enamoured young gentlemen who had contrived to get themselves invited already to the late supper behind the scenes.

"By the by," the Mosca asked carelessly, as he changed, "who was that pretty woman with you tonight?"

Casanova was not at all pleased with either the observation or the good taste in female beauty of his companion.

"A married woman here," he said carelessly, "I had to act as escort tonight?"

"Anything doing?" asked the actor with an unpleasant wink.

"Nothing, I'm afraid," said Casanova coolly, getting up from his seat. "Hadn't we better join the others? I've yet to be introduced, you know."

"No hurry, no hurry," said the Mosca, scampering nevertheless into his breeches and stockings, "they'll keep it up late enough, you'll see. We've no rehearsal to-morrow."

Putting a last pat to his hair and flicking a little of the dust off his rather shabby clothes, the Mosca guided Casanova through some narrow lanes behind the theatre to the room which the players had hired as their common dining room and meeting place. It was a large barn of a place, looking all the more barn-like since it had open rafters overhead and a litter of theatrical properties at one end. In the middle was a long table covered with a spotless tablecloth and set for dinner, with very tall wicker-covered wine flasks at intervals down the centre, and decorations of evergreen ivy skilfully trained in patterns like those still to be seen carved on antique pilasters. Two or three large oil lamps patterned after those of ancient Rome hung from the ceiling, and there were candles shedding their calm glow over polished glasses and brightly coloured Tuscan ware. It was bohemian, almost peasant in its setting; and Casanova, who was more at home in that kind of society than any other, instantly took to these lighthearted wanderers, who came strolling into the room singly or in twos and threes, and settled to the table in little groups of friends. A couple of waiters and a thick-thighed, wide-breasted peasant girl began running to and fro with plates and spoons and tureens of *minestra*.

The Mosca had hailed a couple of girls from the cast to whom he introduced Casanova as "my friend the Barone Casanova," at the same time whispering to him to keep the title, and informing him that both the girls had been known

to be kind to gentlemen who treated them with a certain generosity. Casanova took his cue, played up as the nobleman about town, and charmed the "nymphs" (as Mosca insisted on calling them) by his gaiety and wit, which poured out all the more spontaneously from him since this most sociable of rascals had for weeks been living *tête-à-tête* with Henriette. But now the absorption of passion was slackening a little, and a feast with cheerful companions looked good to him.

This was a gala night for the troupe, and the first course was followed by roast kid and roast chicken, immense portions of which were dumped in front of them amid the delighted cacklings of the "nymphs". Pleased with the simplicity which took such fare as luxuries, Casanova urged them on, fetching them bread and vegetables and filling their glasses with the strong red wine. Soon the decorous babble of talk became louder and more strident, faces flushed, laughs boomed out, there were discreet foot-treadings and hand-squeezings, surreptitious glances into the openings of low-cut dresses. At the height of the fun Casanova felt himself nudged by the Mosca, who exclaimed:

"Here comes our Marietta at last! Isn't she a beauty?"

The "nymphs", unwilling to hear another woman praised in their presence, protested, and appealed to the amiable Barcn for support. But he was in no condition to hear or reply to them. Mosca noticed that his face was very red and that his eyes seemed protruding, as he stared at a young woman, handsomely dressed, who came gracefully across the room, and chose the nearest of the half-dozen places offered by vociferous male admirers. The fact was, and even Casanova could not deny it, that this handsome and graceful young actress was none other than the Marietta he had been going to marry in Chioggia, whom, if he ever thought of her, he supposed to have recovered her virtue long ago by wedding some robust farmer-tenant of Senator Bragadin.

Here was a complication!

Man, who is so bold in entering a new love affair, is often the cheapest of cowards when an old one returns to haunt

him. To Casanova's credit—or discredit, as you choose—he was often happy to welcome an old love after a decent interval of time had made her almost new again; but he was ready to send Marietta to the devil, in spite of the change for the better in her deportment, fortunes and even features, and the flattering circumstance that he had been the first to “recognize her talent”, as the critics say. He imagined with horror her meeting Henriette, their mutual confidences, and perhaps yet another flight of that over-strung and too romantic young woman. If he had not been in need of the money promised by the Mosca, Casanova might have developed one of those sudden illnesses he could pick up in half a minute, and would have evaporated from the company. . . .

But it was already too late—Marietta had seen him, and just heaven! had risen from her seat, was coming towards him, was at hand!

“Why,” she told the company in a voice which had warmed and grown richer but still kept traces of its rustic training, “this is an old friend!” And to him: “Have you forgotten Marietta, Giacomo?” And, before he could answer, gave him a smacking family kiss on each cheek, and marched back to her seat.

Now, Casanova couldn't take French leave. She had made him look ridiculous, and he had to sit it out. To the questionings of Mosca and the “nymphs”, he replied that he had “known her slightly” (an understatement this) at Chioggia before her marriage. For the details, he referred them to the lady herself, and she merely parried laughingly the questions they shouted at her through the uproar of a table which was making serious inroads on the Chianti flasks. The “nymphs” continued to plague Casanova with questions and surmises about his former relationship with Marietta, some of which were near enough to the truth to make him wonder, fatuously, whether she had not boasted of him. From time to time he glanced across at where she sat eating, laughing and talking, and receiving the homages of four or five young Florentines with the air of one accustomed to such deference all her life,

though two years ago she had been a chit of a goose-girl on a farm.

The Mosca was less curious than the "nymphs", and in fact cared nothing about the relations of Marietta and Casanova. What troubled him was to get the table cleared, and to find some means of starting play. But some of the party were so uproarious that all idea of serious gambling on that table was out of the question. Mosca solved this problem by having another table brought in, and managed to find an old baize cloth to cover it. The next difficulty was that the young men with the money wouldn't come to the gaming table without Marietta, the "nymphs" and two or three more of the younger women; and none of them would move unless Marietta did.

The Mosca announced this news to his confederate with a ludicrously glum expression on his face which at another time Casanova would have thought funny; as it was, he shared Mosca's depression.

"It's my belief she won't play up because of you," he said in a gloomily accusatory way.

"Me!" Casanova was trying to persuade himself as well as Mosca that the idea was preposterous.

"Yes, you. You weren't attentive enough to her or something when she recognized you," said Mosca fretfully. "What does it matter if she was only a passing acquaintance? You'd have done better to be cordial to her—she practically runs this company. Hang it all, man, she isn't so bad looking."

"I never said she was," Casanova protested.

"Well, you behave as if she was. The only way to get started is for you to be nice to her and persuade her to come over to our table."

"Me?" Casanova couldn't quite accept the situation as a real one.

"Of course 'you'!" said Mosca in a rage. "You've talked to women before, haven't you?"

Casanova nodded agreement, and studied the situation rather unhelpfully. Marietta's head was the centre of a

bunch of young male heads all craning towards her and all trying to say something which would sound agreeable or startling or original. On the side he couldn't help wondering if his own conversational efforts to entrap young women had sounded as silly. . . .

Just how he did it, Casanova himself could not have explained, but partly by impudence, partly by mere physical push and partly—be it admitted—by Marietta's connivance he managed to edge his way into the circle and, that attained, soon dominated the conversation. To his surprise, Marietta did not seem to bear him any ill will for the deceits he had practised to obtain her for a few nights, or for abandoning her in such a blazing hurry. On the contrary, she seemed happy at meeting him again, and when at last he ventured to make his request, she at once rose and went over to the table, followed obediently by her flock of lambs with golden fleeces all ready to be shorn.

From the point of view of winnings it was a successful evening, and even more so from its promise, for more than one of the "suitors of Penelope" (as Mosca called them in a whispered aside) was evidently also bitten by the envenomed asp of gambling. But throughout the evening Casanova had repeatedly to warn himself to concentrate on the game, so nagged was he by two personal problems. Characteristically, it was not until he saw Marietta that he realized he had failed to prepare Henriette for his absence every evening until the small hours for the next three weeks.

Worse than this was the problem of Marietta. He had had a lesson from Donna Giulietta, to warn him that a discarded mistress may hide schemes of vengeance under a smiling face and alluring manners. Here superstition came to support his natural suspicions. Only that morning he had received a letter from old Bragadin, wherein the Senator let him know obliquely but unmistakably that his liaison with Henriette was known in Venice. The Senator had thrice dreamed (so he wrote) of fatal dangers threatening Casanova and his new love from an unknown female who personified Venice. Now, it was true that Marietta did not exactly personify Venice nor

was she unknown to the Senator; but the coincidence of this meeting so soon after the letter made him uneasy. Nor were his apprehensions all a matter of superstition. He knew that Bragadin could pick up crumbs of secret news from his position on the Venetian Council, and be quite capable of thinking afterwards they had been revealed to him in dreams or by Solomon's Key.

The next morning over a very late breakfast Casanova after one or two false starts, said to Henriette as casually as he could contrive:

"I shall be late again tonight and—and for several nights to come."

She looked up quickly, surprised certainly, but with none of the possessive disapproval he had dreaded.

"I shall miss you," she said, with the least touch of wistfulness in her voice. Her acceptance pleased Casanova's selfishness, because it seemed to rid him of any need to feel regretful at neglecting her. He responded with a rush of pseudo-confidences.

"It will be at the same place, I mean at the theatre. These actors, you know, are from near Venice, almost countrymen—they're under Venetian government, I mean, though not pure Venetians. Anyway, I've promised Mosca—you remember him, the amusing little fellow who played Harlequin?—he wants me to help entertain them after the curtain each night. . . ."

"Entertain?" Henriette looked as if she were going to say something more, but evidently changed her mind. She got up from the table silently.

"You're not annoyed by this?" Casanova asked clumsily. "It's only for a week or two, and I couldn't refuse. . . ."

"Of course not," she cut him short gently, "but I'm going to the flower-market. The carriage is waiting."

"You don't invite me! Mayn't I come with you?"

She smiled, and held out her hand, which he seized and kissed eagerly. It was delightful, he told himself, that there should be no secrets and no awkwardness or suspicions between them. In his relief Casanova failed to note that he

had not specifically mentioned gambling and had not even hinted at the existence of Marietta.

That young woman, he admitted frankly to himself during the next two or three gambling sessions, certainly had contrived to add an unforeseen and very awkward complication to the whole situation. After the first evening there seemed to be a general agreement that Casanova was to sit beside Marietta during the gay impromptu suppers which followed the drop of the last curtain, and that Marietta was to sit beside Casanova while he held the bank at the gambling table afterwards. He had thus plenty of opportunity for observing her. As happened to him more than a few times in his long and varied career, Casanova found himself wondering quite without irony how on earth he could have brought himself to abandon so sweet and delicious a morsel.

"I must have been mad," he thought, and then with a rush of remorse, "but the Fates were saving me for someone even more lovely!"

Alas for the woman who loved Casanova—for with him, inevitably and seemingly beyond his power of control, the woman he had could never compete with the woman or women he hadn't.

Yet he was still on his guard with Marietta—the lesson of Donna Giulietta was not forgotten, and not a day passed without Casanova's wondering whether that bitter siren were not even at that moment plotting some revenge against him. As the days passed, and Marietta remained frank and charming, asking him nothing about Henriette, he began to trust her and to feel a sense of gratitude for her magnanimity in not uttering a word of reproach. He felt this so strongly that one evening after watching the last few minutes of the play from the side-lines, he followed Marietta to her dressing-room in order to thank her before she began to change.

He knocked at the door and in answer to her query: "Who is it?" made the customary Italian answer: "I am I—*Sono io*—Casanova." There was a pause, so long that Casanova was just about to repeat his words when her voice

bade him enter. He was disconcerted to find that she had already thrown off her stage clothes, and was getting rid of her paint. The pause had evidently been for the purpose of catching up the loose wrap she was wearing. Loose it was and thin enough for Casanova to remember only too vividly. curves and planes which he had once known more intimately.

"There's a stool over there if you want to sit," she said, going on with her ablutions unconcernedly, as becomes natural in the promiscuity of travelling troupes such as these. "Can I do anything for you? Did you want to ask me anything?"

Her unaffected assumption that he could only come to her because he needed something from her hit Casanova rather hard, harder than such an attitude would have done if he had not been softened by Henriette. It made him feel a good bit of a ruffian.

"Yes, I had something to say," he said huskily, and rather humbly, "but nothing to ask."

She glanced up from her washing bowl.

"That sounds mysterious."

"It isn't meant to be. I wanted to thank you for—well, for all you have done for—I mean, you've been wonderfully kind to me and . . ."

This lame discourse seemed so imperfect and foolish that Casanova thought it best to break off without involving himself further. Marietta did not make any comment until she had finished washing and had sat down to change her stockings.

"Was that all?" she asked archly, looking up at him as she adjusted her garter.

Casanova was at once emboldened and inflamed—never was there a man who could less resist the challenge of that minor and necessary article of eighteenth-century female equipment.

"No! I hoped that you would accept a little gift from me. . . ."

He took a box from his pocket, opened it, and presented it, showing a beautifully chased gold watch, very close in design

to one which she had been admiring the night before in the hands of a young noble, who hadn't the wit and grace to offer his. Casanova had combed the town to find a replica, of the type which ladies then carried in a little pocket near the waist . . . How Man deceives himself—and Woman too! From one point of view, what more natural than such a gift to one who had done so much to help two gamblers? Casanova had not found much difficulty in convincing Mosca that they owed some such acknowledgement to her alliance, and, with a shrewd touch of business, made him agree that it should be paid for out of joint funds, yet presented by one only. All this looked reasonable enough, yet was not Casanova, as so often, inspired or ill-counselled by that two-winged Devil with the golden shafts? Acknowledge the girl's gambling complicity, yes, give her a purse of gold, a percentage even; but why pick on a charming gift withheld by a faint-hearted or stupid lover, and why present it alone when he knew she would be undressing?

Marietta was not so nice as to avert her head from such a gift. Pretty as she was, and the new favourite, she was still novice enough for a trophy of this elegance to be worth weeks of her earnings. She drew the watch from its soft lining, admired it, found the chain and adjusted it. Then:

"How generous you are, so quick to know what one wants . . .!" She was thinking of last night's enamoured youth who had failed her. "I must give you a kiss for that!"

It was said and the kiss given most naturally and frankly, as a pleased child does, and perhaps without intention or after-thought—but to Casanova the touch of woman's lips on his was always a conflagration. As she took her arms from his neck and drew back, he held her, saying:

"There is something else. . . ."

"What?" It must be admitted she made no effort to free herself.

"You must guess what I mean. It's not easy to say, and worthless enough when said, but I do ask your forgiveness for what happened."

He blurted this out with the difficulty an impudent man

finds in acknowledging himself to have done a wrong, and was prepared to see her flare up with indignation at this reminder of how badly he had treated her. Nothing of the sort happened.

"It seems to me I should say that to you," she said, with lowered eyes, and a blush. Casanova could not believe his ears.

"What do you mean?"

"You only did what any young man would have done to a girl who fell in love with him, and that wicked old uncle of mine must needs chase you away with *sbirri* and try to get you into prison and then make me marry an old wretch of a farmer—ugh! How I hated him after you."

Casanova drew a long deep breath, and his hands which had been holding her at the elbows slipped gently down her cool forearms and clasped her hands. This was a point of view which had never occurred to him, but when expressed with such naïveté by his supposed victim, it sounded most reasonable. In any event, who was he to contradict her on that point? It was amusing to think of the enormous pother raised in Venice, so that he had been compelled to lie hidden and eventually to leave his own town, while the supposedly wronged person was the only one not complaining, indeed thought her own party in the wrong! He laughed and she glanced up at him with an inquiring smile.

"I was only thinking," he said, "that if only we had been left to do what we wanted there would have been no trouble at all."

They both laughed, thinking of what they had done; and while love is a serious passion, it is well known that Venus is a laughing goddess.

"Come," he said, drawing her to him, "since we've never been enemies, there's no need to say 'kiss and be friends'. Let us kiss and remain friends."

She held up her lips, but it was not a friend's kiss, nor was the kiss brief, nor was there only one. They stood mouth to mouth for quite a while, and then it was Casanova who released her lips and moved. With a skilful movement he put out the light, and drew her unresisting towards the couch.

8

FOR three days Casanova lived in a high fever of excitement with no pause for rest or thought, especially for thought. He dared not think, for to think would have revealed him to himself, and that he did not want to see. Man is at all times pitiable, but seldom more so than when he lives the exacting tragedy of pleasure, and drugs himself with the poor delusion that it is happiness. What prodigies of energy and dissimulation he lavished to prevent, as he hoped, Marietta from knowing that Henriette existed and Henriette from discovering Marietta! In pursuance of this insane ambition he tried even more insanely to double himself, to make the twelve hours of each day he gave to each woman seem to her like twenty-four. And pitiable the effort was, since it was unnecessary and deceived neither—Marietta knew of Henriette from the mere gossip of the town long before the gold watch kiss and its consequences, and Henriette with her sensitive swift perception of his most secret feelings had inklings of Marietta even before the kiss, and the saddest of certainties afterwards. None of them was content, in spite of the feast of pleasures to which Casanova insisted on bringing them, for all were uneasy, though for different reasons. Perhaps Marietta, who asked least, enjoyed most.

In his frenzy Casanova actually tried to do without sleep except for a few minutes' doze snatched now and then at random; with the result that during the afternoon of the third day he fell asleep on Henriette's couch while trying to persuade her to make love again. She watched him for a little time and then, seeing that even his tremendous vitality had capitulated and that he would now sleep for hours, she dressed silently, ordered round her carriage and drove to the theatre.

It was an hour or more before the opening of the play, but already enthusiasts were standing in line for the cheaper seats, while others were gathered in a little knot outside the door used by the actors. A grim old man with an extra-

ordinarily sour expression on his face stood guard, stubbornly refusing to allow anyone to enter or even to stand too close to the entrance.

Henriette paused, and took in the situation at a glance. Waiting for a moment when a movement of the little knot of loungers left the old man by himself she stepped swiftly up to him and without a word put a gold piece in his hand. His sour expression changed to a surly grin as he took the money and peered into a face which even his withered old spirit and loins recognized as beautiful.

"What do I do for this?" he asked.

"Hush!" Henriette put her finger to her mouth and looked significantly at the idlers who were now crowding back to see the pretty woman and find out what she was doing. She whispered: "I am sent by Signor Casanova with a message. Let me in."

Somewhat grudgingly the man led her into a passage, after driving the little mob back a few paces with a horrid sort of growl.

"What message? Who d'you want?" he asked suspiciously.

"Casanova is ill, and can't come this evening," she lied hurriedly. "He wants me to speak to the lady for him. . . ."

"What lady?" The old man was turning surly again, and giving away nothing.

By way of answer Henrietta produced another gold piece.

"Take me to her dressing-room, and this is yours."

"She isn't here yet," he grumbled, looking at the money.

"Never mind. Take me there, and I'll wait for her."

As Henriette sat waiting in the low-roofed and none too comfortable dressing-room, twilight settled down, and church and convent bells chimed and jangled the Angelus. The noise died away into a melancholy silence which reinforced the natural sadness of the hour. Henriette began to feel uneasy. In coming to the theatre and using her ruse to force her way into the presence of Giacomo's mistress, she had followed a sudden impulse without reflecting what she was going to say and do when she met the woman, or what sort of woman she might be. Suppose, Henriette shuddered

with repugnance, she should turn out to be loud-voiced, impudent, resentful? She got up and moved about the room, then stood by the slowly darkening window and for a minute or two watched a strange procession of bats squeezing themselves one by one from a hole in an old tower, then dropping like stones, and each saving himself almost miraculously it seemed, by an unexpected unfurling of wings. She wished her mental agility equalled the physical agility of the bat, and had just determined to run away when the silence of the room was ended by the sound of high heels on a wooden carpetless corridor and a voice singing carelessly and happily. The door swung open, the two women confronted each other and:

"O Heaven!" said Marietta, already with the true stage intonation. "How you startled me, my dear! Aren't you in the wrong room?"

She's pretty, Henriette thought, too pretty and her voice is quite sweet if it weren't so actressy. . . .

"No," she said, "I wanted to see you."

"Me?" Marietta looked puzzled, "but I never saw you before."

"I've a password which will introduce me," she said using Cino's little device.

"A password? What do you mean?"

"It is 'Giacomo'," Henriette said, watching her closely, and was rewarded by seeing her blench and change colour a little.

"Giacomo?" Marietta asked hurriedly. "Is he ill? Is anything wrong? O Heaven, they haven't forced a duel on him?"

Henriette shook her head to negative all these questions, and Marietta went on impatiently:

"Well, what is he doing then?"

"When I left him he was fast asleep," said Henriette dryly.

Marietta looked at her a moment, taking in this piece of information. She laughed.

"Then you evidently are one of us," she said. "In fact you must be Henriette! Will you sit down?"

"I don't mean to keep you," Henriette said, sitting down, "I know you have work to do, but I think we ought to clear up . . ."

"I'm sorry it's over so soon this time," Marietta remarked pensively.

It was Henriette's turn to look puzzled.

"I was the girl who fell in love with him in Chioggia, and then my silly old uncle fetched the police," she explained. "I daresay you've heard of it—they tell me there's a song about it sung over all north Italy. He ran away from me, you know. Oh, I don't blame him now, though he cost me plenty of tears and scoldings and not a few beatings. It's not his fault, you know. He could no more be faithful to one woman than a lion could live on milk . . . what's the matter?"

At the last words Henriette swayed and turned pale, but recovered herself immediately.

"Go on," she said a little huskily, "I'm listening."

"There's really no more to tell," Marietta said, going to the mirror, and starting to prepare her hair for the evening performance. "When I met him here I was happy enough to be his again. I knew he'd go away again when he was tired of me, but as he liked me well enough to come back once, well, who knows? he may come back again."

"You love him very much?" Henriette managed to say.

"Oh, that!" Marietta shrugged her very pretty shoulders, and turned from the mirror to light the candles, "that got killed in Chioggia. If I had wanted to marry someone else, I should. As it was, worse luck, I was forced to marry a rich fool of a farmer . . . But I shouldn't be saying all this to you. You love him, don't you?"

Henriette did not answer that one. She leaned forward as she said earnestly:

"He's so foolish—as if he could deceive either of us! I knew at once. But he is so—he probably thinks he can make us both happy, and he's wearing himself out trying to do it."

"Perhaps that serves him right," said Marietta, a trifle

sardonically, "why should we always have to suffer?"

Henriette passed that over with silent disapproval.

"I am leaving Florence tomorrow," she said calmly. "But I wanted to see you first. Forgive me. It wasn't just idle curiosity. It was . . ."

And to her own distressed surprise and Marietta's consternation, she burst into weeping and hid her face in her hands. Marietta watched her a moment, then put down her hair-brush, fastened her loose hair with a couple of pins, and went over to kneel beside Henriette and take her comfortingly in her arms. As the weeping was brought under control, Marietta said:

"You're trying to tell me that he's free and I may have him?"

Henriette nodded, unable to speak as she tried to stop crying.

"Now you listen to me," said Marietta, hugging her and patting her shoulder, "don't think I'm being insincere or playing a game, because I'm not. And don't go doing anything foolish because you think he doesn't love you. He loves you as much as he can love any woman, and more perhaps than any other woman. Why, he fought against wanting me as he's never thought of doing before in his life, I wager. Don't you know he loves you?"

"It's not the kind of love I dreamed of," poor Henriette managed to articulate.

"Dreamed!" Marietta's voice had a fine contempt in it. "I had my dreams too, and so it appears had Messer Casanova from the fine tales he spun me. But when a woman is Casanova's mistress she forgets dreams and takes realities. He'll never be faithful to you. He couldn't be. It's not in his nature. He can't resist a pretty woman who wants him. But he'll always come back to you. He'll give you the best of himself, and in time. . . ."

"In time," Henriette said, standing up and holding Marietta's hand. "Ah, in time, I shall grow old long before he ceases to think of other lips and breasts! I must go now. But you mean well to me, you're kind. I want to thank you,

and say I—I don't hate you as I thought I ought to. And you're very pretty. I don't wonder . . ."

"Ah," said Marietta with a touch of her new cynicism, as she kissed her rival. "But you know they always say Casanova has a pretty taste in women!"

That much-discussed gentleman was still asleep on the couch when Henriette returned, and began as silently as possible to pack and make preparations for leaving Florence. She left him undisturbed as long as possible, but since many of her possessions were in that very room she had eventually to work there. She allowed herself only the feeble glow of one shaded candle and moved almost as silently as a good sick nurse. Casanova slept on, and she began to think she would be able to finish without his waking. She was folding almost the last garment when something made her glance up, and she saw that Casanova was awake and staring at her. He didn't at first take in what she was doing, and she moved towards him to hide the bag she was packing.

"What time is it?" he asked, yawning, and hauling at his watch-chain. "What! Past one o'clock! Why on earth did you let me sleep so long?" Henriette made no answer, but smiled at him. He burst out laughing. "Mosca will be in a rage with me. Never mind, I'll make it up to the rascal tomorrow." His quick eye ran over her, and silently noted the almost packed bag. "Why didn't you go to bed?" he asked.

"I had a few things to do," she said quietly.

"What things?"

"Oh, just tidying up and . . ."

"You've been out," he said interrupting her as he noticed she still had on walking shoes with a trace of mud on them from the dirty theatre street. "And you're packing! What does it mean?"

"You must still be tired, Giacomo," she said soothingly.

"Won't you go to bed, and then in the morning . . ."

Jealously he noticed that she said "go to bed", not "come to bed".

"I can't go to bed until I know why you're packing." He

went to the door and looked into the next room. "You've got all your things packed! What does it mean?"

Henriette sat down deliberately and calmly.

"Sit down, Giacomo, and don't work yourself into a fever," she said, again in the soothing voice which rather angered him and made him suspicious. "It's really nothing. Just a coincidence. While you were asleep I received an urgent message about those affairs of mine. I am warned that my time of waiting may probably be ending. At any rate I have to leave here and meet with a . . . that is, with a family friend, and . . ."

"You intend to go without me?" Casanova asked, looking at her steadily.

"Why, yes." Her voice was a little unsteady. "The notice was so short, and you have your . . . your work at the theatre. You could follow me perhaps when it's over, or perhaps we could meet somewhere. . . ."

"'Perhaps, perhaps'," he quoted her impatiently, still looking at her. "Why did you go out?"

"I had to ask Cino to get me a travelling carriage for tomorrow. . . ."

"To repeat your famous evaporating trick?" asked Casanova indignantly. "Haven't you nearly broken my heart often enough by these sudden disappearances? I suppose I should be thankful I didn't wake up and find you had gone without so much as a farewell or leaving an address. Haven't you made me suffer enough . . .?"

"But I didn't go, Giacomo," she said gently, tears in her eyes.

"Why must you go at all?"

"I must."

"Then I'll come with you. . . ."

She shook her head sadly.

"You'd be all the time regretting what you left here."

A sudden light seemed to blaze up for Casanova, making intelligible what had been obscure.

"I have it!" he exclaimed, jumping to his feet, and beginning to pace up and down. "You may have gone to Cino's,

but you also went to the theatre!”

She didn't deny or accept the statement, but he felt sure he was on the right track.

“You were suspicious of me,” he went on, “you went to see if you could confirm your suspicions. Was that fair to me, was it the trust you said you felt in me, was . . . ?”

“On the very first day I knew instinctively about you and Marietta,” she interrupted him quietly.

Casanova turned, and dropped into his arm-chair as if he had been shot. His whole line of defence had been shattered by the single word, “Marietta”. He had meant to bluff it off, thinking she was merely suspicious, never imagining that in so short a time she would be so accurately informed. Of course, he could still have kept up the line of denial, trying to make vehemence do duty as truth; but he was too quick, too intelligent, not to see that he could not break her conviction by mere denial and that he would simply injure his own cause.

“What makes you mention Marietta?” he asked at length. “Who told you her name?”

“She did.”

“She? She!”

“Yes, we had a talk together about you.”

Casanova was dumbfounded; as a man who has been spending recklessly would be if he found not merely that he was overdrawn but that he was bankrupt. There was so much of the gambler in Casanova, even in his relations of the heart, that the illustration is not as unfair as it sounds. He had blindly trusted to luck in this game he had played between two women, risking in his excitement the only love that had moved him deeply; and at his most pessimistic he had never imagined the possibility that the two would meet, and meet not in hostility but—as he began to dread—in a female union against him. He felt as foolish as a dolt who accidentally becomes the victim of a practical joke he has plotted for another. . . .

“What had you to say about me?” he managed to ask. It was not a very wise or defensive question, but it was all he

could think of to say. He would have given a good deal to know exactly what those two women had been saying about him.

"It wouldn't interest you," Henriette replied, perhaps with more sarcasm than she intended. She stood up as she spoke, and added:

"I have to finish my packing, and then I must get some rest. And you must still be tired. . . ."

"You think I'm going to allow you to go off by yourself alone and . . ."

"Please, Giacomo!" She put her hand to her head. "It's been hard enough. Don't make it harder."

His mind was racing, but in a void, with complete futility, unable to hit on even a straw of salvation. All it was achieving was the telling him over and over: "You've lost them both, you've lost them both, you've lost them both."

"Harder!" He exclaimed, jumping to his feet in a flurry of self-reproach. "Yes, yes, it is hard for you. But hardest of all for me."

"For you!" There was reproach, even—most fatal blow to Love's uncertain life—a foreshadowing of contempt in her voice. Above all, there was incredulity.

"I know it sounds ridiculous, selfish, unimaginative," he cried, "as if I did not see that I have broken your faith in life by breaking faith with you! Now that I see what I've done I despise myself. I'm like a man who sells the inheritance of a kingdom for a night of revelling. . . ."

Henriette made a swift gesture of disapproval, which Casanova saw and interpreted.

"I'm not trying to depreciate Marietta," he put in hurriedly. "Heaven knows she's a better human being than I. What I am grieving over is the loss of what I had in you, of what you could and did give me, even compared with her. Why, yes, she's sweet and young and generous and lovely, but so are many women, who could give as much, but no more. What maddens me is to think of the infinite treasure I had in you . . . But it doesn't bear thinking of."

Was Henriette moved by these incoherent protests, which

however did not lack a certain passion? Alas, when once suspicion of a lover's sincerity has been aroused, the fairest-sounding words ring false as dicer's oaths. The amorous heart betrayed finds no resting place between over-trust and under-scorn. Yet, until that heart is itself weary of love and seeking change, it listens hopefully for the least hint of amendment, some promise that the sharp bleeding crack in its surface may be healed.

"What is the use of words now?" she said, "you try to thrust me back on the pinnacle you thrust me from yourself. Why burn yourself with thoughts of what might have been, when it is too late?"

"And what have you said but a description of remorse, as bitter as Dante's self?" he exclaimed. "There is no grief like remembering happiness in times of sorrow—above all when the fault is ours. But I am not a god or even a woman—I am a man and a foolish man, and I feel remorse. It is useless, if you like, but none the less sharp."

Now he had touched her, had humbled himself without being abject, which after all is one of the many sacrifices required by an offended lover.

"There is no need for remorse," she said, more kindly. "And I still think you should rest. . . ."

"For you to steal away, and vanish like a capful of swallows in autumn!"

Casanova was fighting with all his strength, not so much to hold her as to be given the chance to try to hold her. His strength was that he had had the sense not to try to deceive her, that his repentance at any rate sounded sincere. His weakness was that he was so tired, that he had difficulty in marshalling his ideas. One idea only he kept in a desperate grip—if he let her separate from him now, she was gone for ever. But that he should have kept secret, and he had let it out in his last remark.

She made no answer, but got up quietly to finish her packing. He watched her with a kind of still desperation, wondering what he could say to soften her. The last garment was folded in, and Henriette struggled to fasten the bag.

He went to her aid, as he would have done with any woman.

"Let me."

The task which had seemed so impossible to her frail hands yielded magically under his steel fingers. It was perhaps lucky that he could find this little chance to show his physical superiority—about the only one left him in her eyes, he reflected grimly. And then, following an impulse as she thanked him indifferently, he took her hand.

"You won't separate us like this, so mercilessly?" he pleaded. "In punishing me, you are punishing yourself. You are making too much of it all. Let me come with you."

"But," she said a little bitterly yet without vindictiveness, "I should be taking you from your other love. I mean to give you back to Marietta."

He controlled a gesture of impatience.

"If circumstances were ideal," he said, trying to smile, "I should not be here pleading with you to take back what you never lost. I should be asking her pardon for going away. . . ."

"Then go to her!" Henriette breathed passionately.

"No!" he saw at last the light of hope breaking, since her tolerance towards Marietta had at last flashed into jealousy. "There is no need, but I shall write to her if . . ."

"If what?"

"If you promise that I may come with you."

"What shall you say to her?"

He shrugged.

"You shall see the letter when it is written, but what is the use of writing it unless I know we are not to separate?"

"What is the use of our staying together, if we are to be divided by every light love that crosses your path?"

This Casanova did not attempt to argue. It seemed to him that he had argued and she had argued enough, and that the time had come to try something better. With a swift eloquent movement he gathered her in his arms, and set his lips to hers. For a moment she stiffened in resistance and then, helpless, yielded herself to the kiss. He did not release her until he

knew he had won—not her entirely but at least the chance to win her back.

“I may come with you?” he whispered.

She bent her head, a little reluctantly he thought, but bent it.

“You promise?” he urged.

“If you will promise to rest until it is time to go.”

“Have you made all arrangements? Will there be room for me?”

“Yes. Now do rest.”

Without a word, Casanova turned and went over to the couch and lay down with his head on a cushion. She picked up his heavy riding cape and spread it over him, tucking him in like a child.

“Thank you,” he smiled up at her.

She bent and kissed his forehead lightly.

“Thank you,” he said again, much more gratefully; and then as she turned to go, “by the way, where are we going?”

“To Venice,” she said from the door.

“To . . .” he half rose on his elbow in his surprise. He seemed for a moment about to make some comment, some objection she thought; but he said nothing, and dropping back shut his eyes as she turned and went out.

Both had forgotten the letter to Marietta.

9

THE journey over the Apennines to Bologna, and thence by way of Ferrara, Rovigo and Padua to Venice, is a pleasant one in springtime, by carriage, with the right person. There were no unpleasant happenings, and as Florence and its bitter associations dropped ever further away from them, they lived themselves back into honeymoon—but one with a touch of wormwood in its honey, a warning. Casanova knew he was on probation, so to speak, but as they travelled at leisure, by sunny hours only, he grew more confident; and when he

touched once more his native city of marble and water, speaking in Venetian to the gondolier as he helped Henriette into the boat, Casanova felt himself again.

There had been one small happening on the way, not actually unpleasant in itself but in its possible implications. As they were leaving the inn at Bologna, Henriette caught Casanova's elbow and whispered to him sharply:

"Who is that man? Look, that dark man with the beard and no hat, over there!"

"What man?" Casanova still had not picked him up from her vague description, "has he done anything? Who . . . ?"

"If I saw him once in Florence I saw him a hundred times," she said. "He seemed to be spying on me. There! He's moving away! He sees we're talking about him."

"Ah!" Casanova at last had seen him.

"You recognize him?" she asked anxiously, "who is he? What can he want?"

"I'm sure I don't know," Casanova replied carelessly. "A beggar perhaps without courage to beg. Come . . ."

"But you sounded as if you recognized him!"

"Did I? He is vaguely familiar? Perhaps I saw him in Florence."

"But you don't know who he is?"

"How on earth should I know? We really must start, dearest. The postillion is getting impatient—a most rare disease with them, except when they are awaiting a tip."

See what it is to have an uneasy conscience! But for that Casanova would have replied instantly that he did know the man—he was a kind of confidential steward or bailiff in the service of Donna Giulietta, and Casanova had more than once noticed the man skulking at his heels in Florence. But with so narrow an escape from dismissal by Henriette for infidelity so recent, he dared not mention the name of Donna Giulietta to her. It might lead to questions, to suspicions, to all sorts of complications—and it was bad enough to have her in Venice where lived Rosaura and even Casanova scarcely knew how many others, from Marta and Angela onwards, who could cause a similar upset by a dozen only too

truthful words . . . It seemed safer to know nothing about the man, though Casanova had an uneasy feeling at knowing Donna Giulietta's watch over them had shifted from Florence to Bologna, and might continue to Venice.

He half expected, half dreaded to see this rather unskilful spy still dogging them in Venice; but the man, if he had followed them there, remained invisible and Casanova forgot about him in the excitement and pleasure of finding a *casino* for Henriette, showing her the amusements and beauties of his city, and meeting his old friends again. Venice meant more to Casanova than he admitted to others or even to himself. He was a cosmopolitan, certainly; but after all Venice was the most agreeable place in Europe, not excepting Paris. . . .

When Casanova entered the *salone* of Ca' Bragadin without being announced, it seemed as if the many months he had been absent dropped away like water from a stone—he could have sworn that they were playing the identical game of tric-trac, except that Marco was not there. Of course there were cries of rejoicing at his return, embraces, slaps on the back, pinches of snuff to excuse the use of handkerchiefs, a twittering of old men's voices. Yet there was a constraint about them which Casanova, even in his pleasure at seeing them, could not help noticing. There were hesitations, glances behind his back, even a lack of warmth when he spoke of remaining in Venice indefinitely. They looked embarrassed; and he put it all down to the presence of Henriette, without stopping to ask himself how they could have known Henriette was with him when they had not known he was in Venice. Piqued by what he considered their criticism, he decided not to mention Henriette's name.

"Where is Marco?" he asked.

"Did you expect to find him here, lad?" old Bragadin answered. "Pest! He knows better than to waste his time with a parcel of old wigs like us. You know perfectly well he came here only for you. We haven't seen him for weeks."

"Is he with his father?"

"Ah, you need him for one of your escapades?" interposed

Barbaro cynically "Let me warn you, Giacomo, that last affair of yours is not yet forgotten and . . ."

"I can take care of myself, Excellency," Casanova put him off coolly, "I thank you for the warning. . . ."

"Don't treat it too lightly," Bragadin said with a seriousness rare in him, except when dealing with Solomon's Key and similar occult matters. "Take our advice, leave Venice as quickly and secretly as you came."

"Ah! Don't grudge me a welcome," said Casanova half in joke and half in vexation, "even if you are sorry to see the prodigal at home again."

"You say that to try and taunt us out of our caution," said Bragadin stiffly. "You should know better. But sit down, and let us ask some questions of the sacred Key."

"Not now, sir, if you'll pardon me," Casanova said carelessly. "I've much to do, and came to call first on you, as affection and gratitude prompted me. I'll come again tomorrow, and we'll have a long talk with the Key, as long as you wish."

"But tomorrow's Ascension Day!" the three old men exclaimed almost together.

That was the great festival of the Venetian Republic, the day of the annual symbolic "wedding of the sea", when the Doge solemnly cast a ring into the Adriatic, which ceremony was followed by a week of rejoicing.

"I'd forgotten," Casanova said lightly, but instantly thinking that the festivities would be a pleasant introduction to Venice for Henriette. "Well, I'll come in the evening . . ." And then he thought the evening might perhaps be spent more agreeably, and added, "or next morning. And now *au revoir*. If you see Marco, don't forget to tell him I'm here."

"As if we should!" said old Bragadin kindly, taking his hand. "Go your ways, lad, and take care of yourself. And—one more warning—beware of secret politics when the hostility of nations is concerned."

"Politics!" Casanova laughed aloud. "What do I care for politics, national or international! You know my tastes."

"But your friends may have different ones. . . ."

"Am I to answer for my friends' sins?" Casanova asked, shrugging. "Now I must go. Farewell for the present."

And he was gone. The three old men looked at each other.

"He hasn't changed much," said Ziani.

"Looks older," said Barbaro.

"But no wiser," added Bragadin, with a sigh. "Yet I'm sure the lad means no harm. All the same, I wish we could persuade him to stay away from Venice until . . . ah well, these things are in the hands of mightier than we!"

Meanwhile, entirely careless of hints which sounded ridiculous and Polonian reflections he didn't hear, Casanova sought through Marco's customary haunts methodically until, from information received, he ran that young man to earth in an unaccustomed burrow—a wineshop on the Zattere, where he was sitting under the waving leaves of one of Venice's rare plane trees, mooning drearily over an untouched flask of wine. The change in his demeanour the moment he saw Casanova was remarkable. He jumped up, embraced his friend, slapped him on the back, danced round the table, laughed, cried, and then roared to the waiter to bring wine.

"What's the matter with that?" asked Casanova pointing to the table.

"By God, I'd forgotten about it. Here . . ." he poured Casanova a glass with a shaking hand, "I won't ask what fortunate wind blows you home to Venice. I've been as dull as salt codfish in Lent since you went away. What news?"

"None but the best," said Casanova, sitting down, and sipping the wine to humour him. "Are you busy? Can you come with me?"

"Busy! What would a man be busy with in Venice?" Marco grumbled, "there's never a war or hope of revolution, nothing but dull security and trade and . . ."

"No pleasures?"

"Pleasures? Yes, but what we need is a little danger, some blood-shedding to shake us out of our apathy."

"The devil!" said Casanova lifting his eyebrows, "you've

changed since I saw you. Who is she? Come on, now. Oh, if you won't . . . So there's no public news?"

"Nothing but what you've read in our dull gazettes—still written by hand at this date! Isn't that typical of us? Hand-written newspapers in the eighteenth century!"

"It's one way of keeping track of liars and libellers, I suppose," said Casanova indifferently.

"There's one piece of secret news," said Marco, lowering his voice and looking round, "my father heard it yesterday in the Council, but he thinks there's nothing in it . . . There's been a denunciation about some sort of a plot to hand over by treachery our Dalmatian fortresses to the Austrians."

Casanova stared incredulously.

"How the devil could that be done?"

"How the devil should I know?" Marco retorted carelessly. "I tell you the rumour."

"If you've got nothing better than that to tell, you'd best listen to my news," said Casanova contemptuously. He had been holding back his information with increasing difficulty, and now, leaning forward and dropping his voice to a confidential whisper he said: "At last, I've got her!"

"Her?" asked Marco in perplexity, "what her? Marietta?"

"Marietta? Pshaw!" Casanova retorted. "No, my boy—her, her, the only and perfect her, the nymph of the boat-wreck and the laconic notes signed 'H' . . ."

"Ah!" Marco was really interested at last, "you've found her? Where is she? Who is she? Why . . ."

"That's enough," Casanova interrupted, "she's French, her name's Henriette, she loves me and . . ." he paused to get the full effect, "she's in Venice."

"The devil she is!" said Marco, marvelling.

"Do you want to see her?"

"Are you serious?"

By way of answer Casanova rose from his chair, threw some money on the table to pay for the wine they had barely touched, took Marco's arm and led him to a waiting gondola. Casanova gave the oarsman directions Marco couldn't catch, and then sat in the *felze* with him talking, most provokingly,

of anything but Henriette and refusing to answer any of Marco's questions.

They had debarked on a *fondamenta* and Casanova with Marco on his arm was strolling towards a row of tall close-built houses when the door of one of them suddenly opened, and a man emerged. Almost at the same moment he noticed Casanova, and in a flash pulled his hat over his eyes, threw up a fold of his cloak to conceal the lower part of his face, and darted round a corner and into a waiting gondola, which instantly pushed off. Casanova stood motionless throughout this little episode which did not occupy thirty seconds, so wrought upon that he clutched Marco's arm with all his strength.

"Owl!" Marco expostulated, shaking free, "you're breaking my arm with that fiend's grip of yours, Giacomo."

Casanova did not apologize.

"Did you see who that was?" he asked, pale with anger.

Marco nodded, and without uttering the name his lips formed the syllables: "Von Schaumburg."

"What the devil was he doing here?" Casanova blazed, and strode for the door, dragging Marco after him. It is odd, but too common a male trait to need exposition, that the man who not a week before had needed to sue abjectly for oblivion of a sexual infidelity, was in a passion of rage, suspicion and jealousy at the mere thought of the feminine retort amorous. Casanova was prepared to grind Von Schaumburg's bones to powder, and to make fee-fi-fo-fum noises to Henriette indefinitely. It was lucky for the peace of these two that Marco was there, and so compelled the simmering Casanova to keep his wrath simmering a little longer. Marco for his part was no less taken by the grace and beauty of the woman than he was distressed to see that she had been weeping—a fact which Casanova in his fume entirely overlooked.

The presence of a third person while preventing any outbreak did not dissipate a sense of constraint, arising on the one hand from Casanova's jealous rage and on the other from Henriette's perception that something was wrong. By way

of diverting an uneasiness he too felt without being able to explain, Marco made an offer:

"Tomorrow is our annual ceremony of the Wedding of the Sea, Signora," he said to Henriette politely. "You must not miss it."

"I'm afraid I shan't be able to. You see, we have only just arrived. . . ."

"But it will cost you no more trouble than stepping from the *fondamenta* into my father's gondola," said Marco politely, "he will be on the Bucintoro tomorrow with the Doge, and leaves the gondola to me. You and Giacomo must come with me. . . ."

"It's very kind of you," Henriette said hurriedly, looking more and more embarrassed, "but really I couldn't, it is quite out of the question and . . ."

"What are you talking about!" Casanova interposed explosively. "Of course we'll come, Marco, and picnic on the water while the Doge and the rest of the magnificos are at St. Helena."

"But, Giacomo, I don't want to go. . . ."

"You don't know what you're missing," he insisted, and then to Marco. "Of course we'll come. She's tired from her journey, and doesn't know what she's talking about."

This was said so rudely that Henriette's eyes filled with tears. Marco, of course, accepted the hint, and instantly took his leave, after fixing the hour when he would call for them.

When Casanova, gloomy-browed and filled with that resentment all men feel when they are being unjust to those they love, returned from seeing Marco to the door, Henriette said gently:

"Why did you insist on this trip tomorrow, Giacomo? You will have to make my excuses—I shall not go."

"Not go!" Casanova fumed at her. "And why not, I should like to know? It is insulting to refuse. You do not know what a Valieri is—Marco is son of one of the great Venetian families. He will take us afterwards to see the great banquet in the Ducal Palace. . . ."

"But, Giacomo, suppose that—for reasons of my own—I don't wish to be seen here in Venice, but just to be with you. . . ."

Casanova's face darkened.

"For reasons connected with von Schaumburg?" he sneered.

Henriette did not answer, but gazed at him, growing paler and paler, until he was sure she was going to faint. Terrified out of his foolish jealousy by the effect of his remark, and yet confirmed in his suspicions by it, Casanova started towards her with outstretched hands. But she waved him aside.

"What makes you mention that name?" she asked in a husky whisper.

"I saw him leave the house just as we landed. What was he doing here alone with you?"

The colour came back to Henriette's cheeks, and she rose from her seat, still trembling a little, and went to him, putting her hands on his shoulders.

"Ah, Giacomo, how you terrify us both with shadows! Yes, the ambassador was here. You know, I told you about my reasons for knowing him—my mother and . . . He only came here to say that he would go on trying to help me, but that I must not see him again. You know yourself how jealous the Venetian government is of all ambassadors. . . ."

"But you are not a Venetian," Casanova said quickly. "I don't understand. However . . ." and his face cleared up in one of his charming smiles, "if you're going to promise me you won't see him again, all will be well."

"I don't want to see him again," she said emphatically, "but how silly you are to trouble your head about a man older than my mother!"

Casanova did not notice that she had failed to give the promise—he was pleased by her evident lack of personal interest in the Austrian, though if he could help her to these estates Casanova was not the man to object.

"We'll say no more about it," he said, kissing her, "and we'll spend the day on the water tomorrow with Marco. You won't regret it. . . ."

"Please, Giacomol!"

"It's one of the great sights of the world."

"But if I beg you, Giacomo—really I mustn't be seen here."

"Why on earth not?" Casanova frowned, obstinately determined now not to give way. "You've the prettiest face in Venice, so why shouldn't it be seen? From the way you talk, one would imagine you had committed some secret crime!"

"Well, I'll come on one condition . . . that you promise we leave Venice within two days."

"*What!* Why, you wanted to be here, talked of staying here for months. . . ."

"But I have . . . news, that makes me want to leave."

They were still arguing, Casanova on his side insisting, Henriette pleading, when the clock over the entrance to the Calle dei Fabbri struck midnight.

Nevertheless, Casanova won the contest, and, in spite of Henriette's extreme reluctance, shepherded her into the beautifully gilded Valieri gala boat when it arrived next morning. At her urgent entreaty Henriette was allowed to sit in the back of the *felze*, and to watch the great water pageant from behind a loose awning. It was indeed an extraordinary spectacle she saw when they reached the open lagoon opposite the Ducal Palace. The waters were covered with gilded galleys, barges and gondolas, flying brilliantly coloured flags and streamers. At that moment the Doge, Francesco Loredano, descendant of one of the greatest of Venice's noble families, was embarking on the huge state galley, the Bucintoro, followed by the Patriarch of Venice and other prelates, the heads of the government and all the ambassadors. The galley itself, by an interesting irony, was the last of the many which served in this age-old ceremony, and by far the largest and most gorgeous, flying an immense red and gold banner of St. Mark.

The whole procession moved slowly across the smooth water of the lagoon under a cobalt blue Venetian sky towards the island of St. Helena, the Bucintoro leading, and the rest of the innumerable smaller vessels following. Three admirals

were on the great galley of State, which was rowed by a hundred and sixty of the most valued workers from the immense arsenal of Venice. At the island the Bucintoro was brought to, while the Doge went ashore and was greeted by the Bishop of Castello in a quaint ceremony, where he ate chestnuts and drank red wine and distributed roses from a great silver cup.

All this Casanova and Marco described to Henriette as they rowed along, and Marco pointed out to her the galleys and gondolas of the nobles. While the Doge was on shore they like everyone else made a hasty meal as they waited, and then once more followed the Bucintoro as it steered for the open sea to the sound of loud music. At a given moment the Patriarch blessed a gold ring, which the Doge cast into the Adriatic with the solemn words: "Sea, we espouse you in token of true and everlasting rule over you"—which was followed by a crash of exultant music from the galley's musicians.

In the excitement of watching this curious and brilliant scene Henriette had forgotten her precautions and was leaning from the *felze* so as not to miss anything of the ceremony. At that very moment an ordinary, ungilded gondola passed them, and Casanova with a sinking feeling at his heart recognized one of the three passengers as Donna Giulietta, who was gazing at the Valieri gondola and its occupants with curious intentness. Casanova uttered a smothered exclamation, which startled Henriette and made her shrink back into the *felze*, though she had not seen the gondola any more than Marco, who was absorbed in watching the ceremony. Donna Giulietta made no sign of recognition as she passed, and the gondola—conspicuous by its very plainness in that vast regatta of gala craft—turned and made swiftly for the Lido passage back to Venice.

Casanova said nothing to his companions, and made no objection when Marco suggested that instead of returning immediately to Venice, they should go to the Lido. He knew a fisherman, he said, whose wife was an excellent cook of the fresh fish her husband brought in—particularly red

mullet—and Marco had stored some good wine with them to drink when he went out there. Marco knew Casanova delighted in impromptu meals of this sort with simple country people, and Casanova was only too glad to accept the offer—he wanted a little time to think.

Why was Donna Giulietta in Venice? Casanova could not help remembering the servant of hers they had seen following them in Florence and again in Bologna. Could she have come so quickly after them as all that? And if so, with what intention? If she meant some kind of mischief, surely she would have loosed her cut-throats at him in Florence or along the road. Like most people, Casanova felt safer in his own country than out of it, wanderer as he was. After all, he told himself, Donna Giulietta was a stranger in Venice, and he was a citizen. Aristocrat as she was, it was she who had gone to the Bucintoro ceremony in an ordinary gondola, and he in the state gondola of a patrician. . . .

On the whole then, he decided, there was particular danger to be feared; but he thought by way of precaution that he would immediately alert his "secret police" as he called them—gondoliers, café waiters, a barber, and even a couple of clever urchins, and have Donna Giulietta's movements watched. Between them, they might be able to discover what she was doing in Venice, who were her protectors, her lover—if she had one—and whether she was still angry with him, the great Casanova.

So, as the gondola returned to the entrance of the Grand Canal, after a day which seemed to have amused and tranquillized Henriette, Casanova suddenly asked to be put ashore near the pillars of the Piazzetta.

"I have to see someone there," he said casually, "and then I must drop in on the Senator for half an hour. You know," he went on, turning to Henriette, "I believe Bragadin is the staunchest friend I have; and being a Senator he can usually get me out of my little troubles with authority. I must humour the old man, and give him some of my time. Let Marco take you back to the *casino*, Henriette, and I'll be with you in a couple of hours. Thanks for the day, Marco," he

called over his shoulder, as he stepped ashore and the gondola pushed off.

He watched them glide away for a few moments, and then turned to stride away himself, when he was interrupted by a man who said politely:

“Giacomo Casanova?”

“Himself.”

“Will you give yourself the trouble to follow me.”

“And where, pray?” asked Casanova haughtily, drawing himself up.

“To prison. You are under arrest,” said the man, changing his tone to one of brusque command as he signed to a couple of men who instantly closed up on the prisoner. Casanova’s heart seemed to stop beating for a moment, and his blood felt cold. Yet he plucked up enough spirit to ask with apparently equal haughtiness.

“And by whose orders?”

“By mine,” said a voice at his elbow.

Casanova looked in the direction of the voice, and nearly fainted when he saw who it was—Messer Grande, chief of the Three State Inquisitors of Venice.

PART III

*"Bona sera ai vivi,
E riposo ai poveri morti;
Bon viaggio ai naviganti
E bon note ai tuti quanti."*

(Good evening to the living,
And rest to all the dead
Good sailing to our mariners,
To all good night and bed.)
(Old prayer of Venetian children)

I

A MAN who in an instant steps from happiness to misfortune, from freedom to captivity—and that in the hands of the most secret, ruthless and efficient tribunal ever to function—such a man easily falls into the frenzy of despair, and by his violence and imprudence may make an already desperate situation hopeless. Casanova indeed felt the horror of his situation piercing him like icy needles; but by a tremendous effort regained his self-control, and made no resistance. A second later he saw how futile any such outburst would have been, for Messer Grande was accompanied by at least forty *sbirri*. Indeed, Casanova had run himself straight into the heart of the full pack, for the inquisitor was just about to send his men out in groups to look for Casanova, and three police gondolas were moored together. One of these started off in pursuit of the Valieri gondola, but from the speed with which they moved and then suddenly dodged into a side canal, Casanova judged that his arrest must have been seen by them. But, he reflected ruefully, if the Three wanted to arrest them, it wouldn't take long.

So much Casanova partly guessed and partly saw over the heads of his captors as he was taken to the prison. The arrest had been made so quietly and without disturbance that people passing within a few yards were not aware of anything unusual going on. Indeed, arrests by the State Inquisitors were almost invariably made at night, and this only occurred in broad daylight because the wanted man obligingly walked

straight into the net—a fact which naturally told in his favour rather than against it.

The Venetian State prisons (the famous or infamous “Leads” and “Wells”) abutted on the Doge’s palace immediately before them; but partly because of the curious difficulty of access in a city of waterways, partly to follow immemorial custom, Casanova was put in a gondola and solemnly rowed the few score yards to the prison quay. There after going up several flights of stairs, he crossed the little Rio di Palazzo by the high covered bridge, known to generations of travellers as the Bridge of Sighs. After passing through a gallery and a room, he was brought to a second room where a Venetian patrician was seated. This was Dominic Cavalli, secretary to the Inquisition who merely said: “Put him away securely,” and in Casanova’s opinion greatly added to the insult of this unkind directive by saying it in Tuscan instead of Venetian.

Casanova was not taken immediately to his cell, but after a short wait was led down flight after flight of stairs to an underground chamber adjoining the torture room, where he found himself facing the dreaded Three, sitting as a tribunal without appeal and without advocates, themselves acting as both prosecutors and judges. The centre figure, appointed by the Doge himself, was dressed entirely in red; the other two, delegated by the Council of Ten, were dressed in black. By way of adding to the impressiveness of this ceremonious inquisition the guards who brought Casanova down extinguished their torches as soon as he had been recognized by the judges, and the only light came from two poor candles on the desk of the recording scribe and a sinister red glow from the half-open door of the torture chamber. Evidently this was some sort of forge with a bellows, for from time to time the flame was blown up till it roared and then gradually died down, so that the proceedings were held in this varying red illumination.

The man would scarcely have been human who could note such unequivocal signs of hideous tortures in preparation, and not blench. Casanova felt as unhappy as any other

wretched human would have felt in the like situation, and the only comfort he could find was that most flimsy and insecure defence of the weak—the fact that he was innocent. Indeed, he had not the faintest idea what the charge against him might be, and it was not until Messer Grande began formally by asking his name that there flashed into Casanova's mind the possibility, the probability, nay, the certainty that the name of his denouncer must be Donna Giulietta. But he had no time to meditate on this, one of the unpleasantest forms of revenge a woman could compass, for all his attention had to be directed to understanding and answering the questions of his prosecutors.

Casanova told himself that the only possible defence for him, the only chance of escaping torture and death or long imprisonment was to answer as frankly and truthfully as he could. He tried to tell himself that the Republic boasted of the excellence of its laws and the purity of its justice—indeed, Casanova himself had often done so to foreigners; but it now struck him that these sentiments sounded more convincing outside the Inquisition than in it. The first line of questions, dealing with his parentage, his upbringing, his habits and lack of occupation rather than occupation, his friends and so on, were all comparatively innocuous and easy to answer. Casanova could not imagine what they were trying to establish.

He soon found out, however, when a new series of subtle questions began, trying to elicit his admission that he was discontented, without any honourable profession or trade, an adventurer. This was so true or nearly true that Casanova could not deny it, but he began to curse the over-freedom of his speech when remark after remark was quoted to him which made him out a much more desperate, unscrupulous and censorious critic of society than in fact he was. Things he had said jokingly at cafés, remarks over that one bottle too many which spoils so many parties, even things he had said to women, had evidently been picked up and reported for years by police spies, and must have been before the tribunal for a long time, since they could not have been got

up in a day or two. And there was worse to come.

Remarks of his were now quoted which seemed to show that in addition to being a somewhat shady, irresponsible and querulous member of society, Casanova, was politically disaffected and ready to attempt anything disloyal and unpatriotic if it could be turned to his personal benefit, either in money or damage to the State. This, Casanova of course knew at once, was one of the most dangerous charges which could be made against any Venetian, and he cursed the imprudence of his talk when witty and damaging things he had said about Venice to Donna Giulietta were quoted verbatim from written documents. So that was what she had been doing since she left Florence "for Bologna"—and might it not have been well to listen to what Cino had to report instead of snubbing him and his friend for calling themselves "wise men"? All too late, however.

The Inquisitors listened impassively to Casanova's vehement denials and attempts to explain, justify, exculpate what he couldn't deny. It was at this moment that the wretch or wretches in charge of the torture room bellows took the opportunity to blow up their fire to a most threatening red glow—Casanova already saw himself branded and consigned to row as a galley slave for the rest of his life . . . But what was Messer Grande saying?

"You left Venice several months ago, Casanova?"

"Yes."

"Rather secretly and in a hurry?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

The question was certainly put simply enough in a calm voice, but Casanova paused a moment, baffled. Then, recovering himself, he asked their indulgence if he was long-winded, and told them the story of Marietta the second, or third. In the telling it sounded foolish and not a little mean and squalid, but at that moment Casanova greatly preferred to give himself the character of a blackguard than any which suggested a political intriguer. The Inquisitors consulted in a whisper, and then he was asked about Rosaura. Casanova

groaned inwardly at the dismal habit his sins had formed of turning up at this awkward moment, but consoled himself by the reflection that there was after all nothing political in making love to women. He was interrupted in the course of a narrative he made as idyllic as possible by the cold inquiry:

“Where did you get the money for this?”

He told them, and was bidden to continue his story. The next question made him go cold. It was:

“How long have you known Baron von Schaumburg?”

The Inquisitors seemed to be most curious about that distinguished diplomat, and at the same time very well informed of his movements. They knew of course about the wreck outside Bragadin's palace—as that affair had already been before them—and knew about Casanova's private meeting with Schaumburg. The story of the negro used as a decoy they took with cold disbelief. But in addition to these perfectly authentic meetings with the Baron they seemed to have a circumstantial account of a third and most compromising one, held in complete secrecy only two nights before he left for Rome.

His denial was noted with the same impassive calm which Casanova began to feel was more frightening than positive hostility, and then he was asked to explain supposed interviews with such detail and perfidy that Casanova at once detected the hand and malevolence of Donna Giulietta . . . Taking his courage in his hands, he asked the indulgence of the tribunal and, before any mention of Donna Giulietta had been made, gave an exact account of his relations with her. He was acute enough not to make any suggestion against her or to hint that he believed she had denounced him—he merely showed how very much she was his enemy, and linked her with the Austrian ambassador in Rome by saying that he had heard her speak of him.

They asked him for the name of the woman for whom he had deserted Donna Giulietta, and he asked to be allowed a lover's secrecy. They did not insist, but Messer Grande told the scribe:

"Write that he refuses to give the woman's name."

"It is Anne d'Arci, a Frenchwoman," said Casanova immediately.

That was noted, and then, exhausted as he was by a questioning which had already lasted three hours, Casanova was puzzled and exasperated by a long series of questions of which he could not make head or tail. They related to the towns and fortresses held by Venice in Dalmatia and Albania. Had he been to them? Whom did he know there? With whom had he discussed them? And so on, interminably. In the course of this examination he gave a rather shocking display of his ignorance of these important outposts of the Venetian State, and his evident bewilderment and inability to understand what he had to do with the whole subject were perfectly evident to his questioners. They asked him a few questions about Henriette, but they were perfunctory and he easily parried them, and then about his reasons for returning to Venice. And at length, after more than four hours of questioning, the examination ended without the application of torture, or "the question" as it was amiably called. For both of which Casanova was devoutly thankful.

Casanova was now taken back to the upper floor, and formally handed over to the prison warder who took him to a wretched garret under the prison leads, and locked him in a cell twelve feet square and less than six feet high, with a recess for a bed and no furniture of any kind but a bucket, and no window except a barred grating over the door. Having very foolishly made a sarcastic remark about the jailer and refused to say whether he wanted food, he was locked in and left in solitude until dawn next morning. He was then permitted to order a meal of soup, boiled beef, a roast, bread, wine and water (for which he paid) and to send for all his clothes, a bed, table and chair and other articles. He was forbidden books, paper, pens, looking-glass and razors, and allowed only two ponderous works of a devotional kind. Later he was told that the authorities had allotted him fifty Venetian *soldi* a day for subsistence, which was more than he needed.

It seems odd that Casanova should not have realized from the first the necessity and wisdom of making friends with his jailer Lorenzo. But he was so much cast down by the abrupt and disagreeable termination of his life of pleasure that he hadn't his wits about him. He suffered severely from the heat of the sun, and was so much upset by his disaster and depressed by his fate that for fifteen days he had no bowel movement, and fell ill of a fever, lying in bed and brooding over himself and over the possible fates of Marco and Henriette, and longing for death.

Lorenzo, the jailer, was not such a bad fellow as Casanova imagined—for naturally everything and everybody connected with his imprisonment appeared to him in the darkest and most disagreeable colours. At all events, as soon as Lorenzo noticed that Casanova had not touched his food, he asked about his health, and though Casanova ironically persisted that he was perfectly well, Lorenzo brought a doctor, who gave the prisoner treatment, and procured him a book which was less dull.

So the monotonous miserable days ticked interminably away, made far worse by uncertainty, for no sentence had been pronounced upon Casanova and he was in a State which had never heard of *habeas corpus*. Thus he could be held in prison as long as the State Inquisitors thought fit, might be executed publicly or in secret without anyone having the right or power to demand an inquiry. He made matters worse for himself by living in the hope and expectation of immediate release—"tomorrow, I shall be free," he told himself every night—and every day he was disappointed. The solitary confinement, the anxiety about Henriette and Marco, and the constant disappointment over his own release began to prey upon his mind. The only alleviations in the next few months were that he made friends with Lorenzo to a certain extent by giving the man monthly the surplus money from that allotted for his food, and that one or two other prisoners shared his cell for a short time. Scoundrels as they were, at least they were human and he could talk with them.

It was on New Year's day that the first ray of hope came

to him. Lorenzo gave him some furs as a present, for the winter cold in the Leads was as bad as the summer heat. But what touched Casanova's heart deeply was to learn from Lorenzo that old Bragadin had been to the Inquisitors and had begged them on his knees and with tears to be allowed to help his "dear Giacomo", and that those three inflexible ones had permitted him to send six gold sequins a month, together with all the books and newspapers Casanova wanted.

It was while he was temporarily buoyed up by the hopes engendered by this more lenient treatment that he was permitted to walk a little in a larger garret, and there found an iron bar and a whetstone. With the unimaginable optimism of prisoners he now made up his mind to escape, and with their terrible and pathetic pertinacity began to sharpen his bar. It took him a week to point it, and at the end of the time his right arm was so stiff he could hardly bend it, and blisters on his hand broke into a great scab. His plan was to cut through the flooring of his cell into the room below, and thence make his escape through the public buildings. It was an insensately daring plan, but it gave him something to think about and to hope in. All his ingenuity was brought into play to procure himself such a trifle as a lamp, with oil and flint and tinder to strike a light. For his lamp he used a porringer; he persuaded Lorenzo to buy him the best Lucca olive oil for his salads; he made wicks from the cotton of his counterpane; he got three or four small flints from the jailor by a subterfuge, and found tinder used to pad the shoulders of his coat. He then had to feign sickness to prevent these objects from being discovered in his bed.

All preparations were made and Casanova was just about to begin the preliminary task of cutting through the top floor boards when another prisoner was put in his cell, and remained there for some weeks. Casanova was in despair, but it was at the blackest moment that another ray of hope came to him, though it was shadowed by a certain regret.

One day Lorenzo came into the cell, grumbling at the way he was put upon, and handed Casanova a book.

"What's this?" Casanova asked indifferently.

"Can't you see?"

"Well, what of it? It's a religious book, and you know I don't care for them."

"That's no concern of mine," Lorenzo answered indifferently. "It's sent you by another prisoner, who begs you to read it carefully, for it contains holy unction for the good of your soul."

With a muttered curse Casanova threw the book aside without opening it, but a night or two later, as he lay miserably awake devoured by half a hundred impatient devils of resentment and longing, the book occurred to him again. As he thought over the scene, he now imagined that Lorenzo's manner was that sort of surly good nature he always adopted when he was bribed to do something. Moreover, thinking of what he had said, Casanova was inclined to believe that the book might contain some message. He could scarcely wait for the light, and when dawn came, he evaded the attempts at conversation of his fellow prisoner and went through the book leaf by leaf hoping to find a note attached to one of the pages or at least some pencilled message. But if the book had carried any such, they had been confiscated or obliterated on the way, for he found nothing.

Intensely disappointed, Casanova once more threw the volume aside, with many a curse on it and his own stupidity. The very next day Lorenzo said carelessly:

"The other prisoner hopes you benefited by the book, and would like to have it back for his own refreshment when you are ready."

In his disappointment Casanova was ready to fling the book at the man's head, but again, a certain ambiguity in the words made him pause.

"Say I haven't yet really understood it, but will send it back as soon as I've grasped the sacred truth it contains."

Determined to settle this enigma one way or the other, Casanova took the book with him to read as he paced up and down the outer garret where he was now permitted to exercise. It was a brilliantly sunny day, and a shaft of bright light shot

through the skylight and made a square pool of sunlight on the bare dirty floor. The idea came to Casanova that something might have been written on the blank fly leaves which would become visible if held to the light, but the most careful scrutiny of each leaf revealed nothing. He was just about to shut the book for ever and send it back, when as a few leaves turned over he noticed several pin points of light on one of the pages. Looking more closely he discovered at last that certain letters had a pinprick under them, and that they formed words.

Now he was in a fever of excitement and curiosity, but before he could begin to read the message, Lorenzo came to return him to his cell, and Casanova again had to put him off when he wanted to take the book.

"Say, that the light has dawned on me at last, and that I beg for one more day to extract these wonderful religious truths."

Lorenzo looked very puzzled at Casanova's sudden conversion, but nodded and left the prisoners locked up in the inner cell. By bringing the book close to the barred opening in the door, Casanova was just able to see which letters had been pricked, and began a methodical examination of the book. He found that only the chapter before the last had been used, and that the full message ran:

"H escaped I arrested 2 days after you what are we supposed to have done? use this for talks Marco"

Casanova's pleasure at receiving this message from his friend was only darkened by regret at his imprisonment, and only equalled by his relief at hearing that the other occupant of his cell was about to be released. But before he went, Casanova made good use of him. He got a pack of cards from Lorenzo, wheedled the other prisoner into play on the reasonable pretext that it would pass the time, won nearly five hundred ducats from him on parole, and consented to cancel the debt in exchange for a diamond cravat pin which the jailers had forgotten to remove. The man was delighted to be rid of so heavy a debt so easily, and shook hands

warmly with his benefactor, as he insisted on calling Casanova, when he was released.

Once he was left to himself, Casanova's life became intensely busy. At night he spent at least six hours with his little lamp and iron bar, laboriously picking away at the flooring under his bed. As soon as it was light, he set to work with the pin he had won, and pricked out the following message:

“Escape planned which is your cell give position thanks news G”

Casanova had now been in prison over a year, and if his mistresses and friends could have seen him as he sat in his dimly lighted cell, feverishly picking out this message, stopping ever and anon to listen with frightened concentration like a wild animal, these men and women who had known him would indeed have been shocked. His beard and hair had been allowed to grow unkempt and untrimmed; his eyesight was temporarily affected by living so much of the time in semi-darkness; his real illness as well as the sickness he had feigned in order to hide his slow, patient work on the floor, had left him shockingly thin and pale; and in place of his good-humoured smile, his face looked suspicious and vindictive. Indeed, he would gladly have strangled not only his jailer, but the Three, the Ten, the Doge and the whole Grand Council of Venice except Bragadin and Marco's father and a few others.

Men live so much more on hopes than on realizations, so much more in an imagined future than in an actual present! This trait it is which gives civilized Man his energy while it deprives him of contentment. But at the same time it nerves him to endure present ills in the belief, usually misplaced, that within a certain or uncertain time he will achieve some earthly paradise of fulfilled desires. So it was with Casanova, now that he could work towards his own escape and the hope of liberating Marco. As he picked away laboriously night after night at the thick double planking of his floor,

he saw himself already at liberty and escaping beyond the frontiers of the tyrannical republic.

A first disappointment came when Marco, after several fruitless efforts, managed to prick out a plan of the prison and to mark the position of his own cell. Casanova saw instantly that Marco was at the far end of the wing and on a floor above his own, though he had imagined he was directly under the roof. This was a double blow, and there was a brisk exchange of books between the two prisoners, as they tried to work out some method by which they could escape together. Meanwhile, Casanova, after piercing two three-inch planks was filled with despair by coming on one of those mosaic floors so common in large Italian houses. But here again his pointed bar came to his rescue, for when after hours of ineffectual labour he managed to break and remove one of the mosaic cubes, he found that the rest came away more and more easily. Every night when he finished work he hid his lamp and whetstone behind the bed which of course also concealed the growing hole in the floor. The precious bar he hid in a hollow under the seat of his arm-chair. And every day as he walked in the outer garret he disposed of the broken bits of wood or mosaic behind a pile of old sacks and lumber.

After weeks of labour, Casanova believed he had only a day or two more before he would be able to break through the floor, jump or lower himself down by a rope of sheets, and somehow get out on to the roof of the prison. How Marco was to be freed was not yet determined, though Marco reported that if he had a suitable tool he could easily cut his way out on to the leads. He was pricking out a message to Marco detailing a plan he had formed when at a most unexpected time of day he heard Lorenzo's hasty footsteps and only just had time to hide the pin and to pretend he was reading when Lorenzo burst into his cell.

"Thank me for bringing you good news," he exclaimed, with a broad grin on his face.

Casanova declined sourly enough, and when Lorenzo persisted, growled:

"I don't trust you. You're just amusing yourself at my expense. Tell me the news first."

"But it's the best news you could expect."

A flash of wolfish joy gleamed in Casanova's eyes, as the thought struck him that at long last it must be the order of release, at first expected so confidently, and latterly despaired of entirely.

"I'm to go free!" he exclaimed.

"Not exactly," Lorenzo grinned. "But the next best thing. Their Excellencies have heard of your long illness, and not wishing to destroy you, are moving you immediately to a large airy room, with a view—a view right across the lagoon to the Lido."

Poor Casanova! This meant not only the frustration of his attempt at escape, but the discovery of what he had already done, the confiscation of his laboriously made tools, the cutting off of his messages to and from Marco . . . He fell back in his chair in utter misery, and covered his face with his hands to prevent Lorenzo from seeing his despair. That obtuse but well-meaning servant of the State thought Casanova was weeping from excess of joy. And when he almost hysterically begged to be left where he was—he was attached to his cell, he didn't want to leave—Lorenzo not unnaturally thought it was the extravagant joking of sudden high spirits. When at last he found that Casanova was serious, he grew indignant.

"What! Do you treat the kindness of their Excellencies with contempt? Come along, man, and let me show you. The guards will bring your things."

And at his wits' end for any further excuse, Casanova gloomily followed him. It was true. The new cell was a comfortable room, with two good-sized windows, barred it is true, but open to the sea breeze and the sparkle of sunlight. Under any other circumstances Casanova would naturally have welcomed the change, but now as a couple of the guards entered carrying his arm-chair, clothes, books and other little effects, he slumped into the arm-chair, and mutely endured a lecture from Lorenzo on his ingratitude to their Excellencies.

At last Lorenzo and the guards departed, locking the door, and Casanova went to the window and stared unhappily across the roofs and the lagoon to the bright horizon. Yes, it was still the same Venice, and even in this high remote prison room there was an echo of the life "of that people who have laughter in their mouths". Tears came into his eyes as he thought of the happy days when that song was the hit of the day, and he had no troubles but money and girls and light skirmishes with *sbirri*. . . .

The clatter of running feet, the rattle and slamming open of the door told him what was coming. Livid with fury and alternately shaking his fists and tearing his hair, Lorenzo half choked in his rage as he sputtered out questions—of course the hole under the bed had been discovered, as the guards began to clean under the bed they had not been allowed to move during Casanova's supposed illness. He shrugged off Lorenzo's complaints, reproaches and threats with unfeigned indifference—which, after all, was a little unreasonable since the escape of a prisoner from the Leads meant automatically the death of the warder. Once more, Casanova and his poor chattels were dragged away, but this time to a cell with no window, merely a grating in an inner door of immense strength. It had been newly repaired and whitewashed, so that the slightest scratch on the surface would be instantly visible.

"Now," said Lorenzo grimly, "get out of here—if you can. But first tell me how you obtained the things needed for your attempt . . . ?"

"I've nothing but what you gave me!"

"What!"

"Well, you gave me the porringer, and the sheet on my bed and the oil, didn't you?"

"But where did you get the hatchet to cut through the floor—you must have had a sharp little axe."

"I'll tell that to the Three, if you'll take me to them."

This was an unwise remark, because if the least suspicion of a prisoner having obtained means of escape reached the Three, the warder would instantly have been dismissed and

punished. The result was that Lorenzo flung out of the cell in a rage, for three days fed Casanova on bread and water, and of course refused to take any more books between the two friends. An apathy of despair fell upon Casanova, relieved only by the thought that though he had lost his precious lamp and whetstone, he had at least saved his iron bar. Lorenzo searched everywhere, even made Casanova strip and went through his clothes, but never thought of examining the arm-chair. And with this poor and seemingly fruitless little victory Casanova ended that punishing round with the power of Venice.

2

THE next few days were the dulllest and most hopeless of Casanova's imprisonment, remote alike from the contradictory mixture of despair, rage, and hope of his early days, and from the steady glow of energy and optimism of the days preceding his luckless promotion—for how brief a time—to better quarters.

The first alleviation came at the end of the month. Lorenzo presented his accounts, which showed a larger surplus than usual, chiefly because he had revengefully kept his prisoner on such short commons. A flash of his usual common sense came to Casanova.

"Give it to your wife," he said indifferently, "and here . . ." taking one of Bragadin's sequins from his pocket, "share this among the two guards."

These fellows immediately began to praise Casanova's liberality, and Lorenzo himself was a little thawed.

"Ahl" he exclaimed naïvely, "if only you would always be so amenable, Signor Casanova!"

"Well," said Casanova, "I can give you my word I shan't dig through this floor."

For, of course it would be impossible to escape detection, since the room was carefully searched twice daily for any signs of digging.

"Since you're so much more sensible," said Lorenzo, pleased by this remark, "I'll get you the book the other young gentleman has been teasing me to bring you."

With what carefully concealed eagerness Casanova seized on the book, how patiently he endured Lorenzo's maddening talk, and how cunningly he waited until the last footstep had died away beyond the locked door before he ventured to open the book and to look for the message. It was the longest either of them had sent:

"Keep hoping you are under an empty cell next to mine I have cut way to roof hidden opening by picture could hole wall and then through your ceiling if I had tool can you suggest way to get in."

Joy! At the uprush of utterly unexpected hope brought by this letter Casanova fell on his knees and wept. The escape, which but a moment before had seemed so impossible, now looked nearer and more certain of success than at the rosiest moment of his former attempt. Recovering himself a little after this emotional storm had swept over him, carrying away much of the long pent-up bitterness and disappointment, Casanova began eagerly to prick out the return message:

"Insist on exchanging arm-chairs because I am ill tool hidden under seat start on side wall at once more later we shall succeed! G."

As it was planned, so it succeeded. Marco, as a patrician, naturally had been sent a more handsome arm-chair, and Lorenzo was duly touched by this concern of the younger man for his friend. The exchange was made, and another book brought from Marco in which Casanova read:

"Good am hiding debris in closet how can I break through your ceiling later without being seen? Preparing sheet rope to haul you up. M."

Casanova did not think it prudent to reply at once, though he had his answer to the query; but he did not want to awake

any suspicion by too rapid an exchange of books. That night he lay awake, trying to plan beyond the mere breaking out of the cells to the time when they would find themselves on the steep roof high above the Piazza and liable to be seen unless they could get down during the hours of darkness. As he lay in the silence and blackness, Casanova thought he heard some tiny noise which kept repeating. He listened intently and then, suddenly inspired, put his ear to the wall which, continued up, divided Marco's cell from the one above his. It was unmistakable—he could hear the slow cautious pick—pick—pick—as Marco worked away at breaking a hole through the wall. The noise did not cease until three hours after midnight, nor could Casanova sleep a wink for joy until long after the noise of liberation had ceased.

His answer to the query about his ceiling was to wait until the cutting was almost completed and then, on the night fixed for the escape, to work furiously, so that a few minutes would complete the job. The hope of speedy release was a little dashed by a message from Marco to the effect that the cement was so hard round the bricks that six hours' work had sufficed only to get one out. However, it was here much the same as with the mosaic floor, for next day Marco reported jubilantly that he had extracted thirty-six bricks, and would soon be at work on the floor. And, sure enough, only two nights later, Casanova, lying sleepless with excitement and anticipation, heard the steady beat of Marco's pick on the flooring above his head. A week later, Marco sent a pricked message to say that he could now break through what was left of the ceiling in half an hour—which night was it to be?

They were now in the last days of October, and it was customary for the Inquisitors and their Secretary to spend the first three days of November on the mainland, during which time Lorenzo had his own annual spree, which consisted in getting drunk and staying drunk. Casanova had already passed through one of these epochs, as he and Marco had now been in prison over eighteen months. Clearly then the

best time to make the escape would be the night of October 31st—November 1st, when the Inquisitors would be travelling on the water and Lorenzo already be deep in wine. But so superstitious was the free-thinking Casanova under his mask of scepticism that he could not make up his mind to fix the time definitely without consulting the “poetic lots”, so popular in the Renaissance. He had no Virgil but he did have an Ariosto, whose admirers had raised him to a position of equal authority in foretelling the future. Casanova opened the book, stabbed with his pin, and found he had hit the line “Betwixt October’s tail, November’s head”—and believed the stars had spoken oracles. So this date was duly communicated to Marco by pricked book and, as arranged, acknowledged by three light taps, to avoid sending too many book messages.

The two days that had yet to pass seemed to Casanova’s feverish imagination the longest he had spent in prison, and he had learned how bitterly long a prisoner’s day may be, above all when it is prolonged by sleepless unhoping nights. Now he had time to reflect again, after the weeks and months when every nerve and every brain fibre had been bent to the sole task of escape. The thought that if he succeeded Lorenzo would pay the penalty troubled him little, and the fact that if he failed his own life would probably be forfeit seemed scarcely more important. Better be dead indeed and without sensation than slowly moulder in a living grave. He felt far more compunction when he thought of the risk Marco was running at the behest of the friend he had served so loyally. And then, before he fell asleep, staring into the fetid prison darkness his mind went back to Henriette. In a sense her memory had never left him, had been with him every moment of their long separation; but now he began to think of her in more definite terms. Marco had said she had “escaped”—well, the details of that he would soon learn—but what then? Where had she gone? Had she been captured by the Venetian government in spite of this escape? If not, what had happened to her, and where was she? And had she put Giacomo Casanova out of mind . . . ?

Thus the slow hours dragged past until the evening of the thirty-first. Then it was that a sudden exultation gripped Casanova, for when Lorenzo brought the evening meal and locked him up for the night, he saw that the man was already drunk and anxious only to get back to his flask and pot-companions. Casanova's cell was dark as a cellar, and the whole prison sunk in utter silence when the last echo of the last slammed and bolted door had died away. Suddenly in the long seemingly endless silence Casanova heard a rustling noise, and his heart began to beat—it was Marco climbing into the room above and getting ready for his work. The rustling stopped, and then almost at once was succeeded by a picking sound, then a loud ripping and pieces of wood and plaster fell on to Casanova's floor, and a faint grey light gleamed and widened until there was a hole large enough for a man to pass through. Casanova saw the outline of a head peering down, and then came a whisper:

“Are you there, Giacomo?”

“Ayl” Casanova's voice was deep with feeling, “ready and waiting. Lower the rope.”

A rope made of cut and knotted blanket was lowered, and to this Casanova attached his clothes and all his bedclothes, which would be needed for rope-making. Then the rope was lowered again, the word given that it was secure, Casanova went up it hand over hand, a hearty grasp helped him up, and in a second he was on the floor above, shaking Marco by the hand, crying and laughing and slapping backs and embracing.

This cell, like Marco's abutting it, had a small heavily barred window looking over the leaded roof of the prison, and a glance through it quenched Casanova's mood of rejoicing.

“The moon!” he exclaimed, pointing. “Good God, I've been shut away so long from sun, moon and stars, I vow I'd forgotten their existencel We are defeated before we start. We are certain to be seen in this accursed moonlight!”

“There, there,” said Marco soothingly, and then with a joking reference to Galileo's supposed words. “And yet it

moves. 'Twill be down in a couple of hours.'

No more was needed to restore Casanova instantly to his former pitch of excited energy. They crawled through the hole into Marco's cell, and he showed some more of his work with a good deal of pride. An old unframed picture stuck against each wall had been used by Marco to conceal his mining operations. One had hidden the hole into the next cell. The other he now removed, showing a similar but deeper hole hollowed directly under the roof, so that it was the matter of a couple of minutes' work to remove one of the large lead plates, and so get to the roof.

They made no attempt to move it in the moonlight, but returned to Marco's cell where, sitting on his bed, they laboured to turn the remainder of his bedclothes and all of Casanova's into strong knotted ropes—every knot of which Casanova grimly tested with his heavier weight.

"What happened to you and Henriette after I left you all those months ago?" Casanova asked as he worked.

"The gondolier noticed your arrest, and called our attention to it, and I recognized Messer Grande. When I told Henriette what had happened, she was in despair, exclaimed that she had been the cause of your death, and wanted to put back—to try and rescue you or die with you."

Casanova heard this with satisfaction.

"And then?" asked Casanova, working at his knots.

"I told her we could serve you better by remaining at liberty, but she said—only too truly—that they would arrest us too the moment they could. However, we managed to dodge the police gondola, and I advised Henriette to get out of Venetian territory at once. After a lot of argument she consented, I gave her all the cash I had, and agreed to write to her to the Inn at Chiavenna over the frontier. We landed her at a quiet spot near Mestre, gave her directions for finding a posting station, and I have never seen or heard of her since."

"You think she escaped?" Casanova asked, after listening intently to Marco's every word.

"Who can tell?" Marco shrugged, and then seeing

Casanova's anxiety, added: "She had a good start, and they may have known nothing about her, or so little that she could easily get away . . . But, forgive my asking, why are we here?"

It was now Casanova's turn to shrug.

"You know as much about it as I do. In four hours of examination I couldn't make head or tail of what they were getting at or discover what I was supposed to have done."

"Somebody denounced us," said Marco. "I thought so, and so did Bragadin."

"I think I can guess who it was," Casanova said slowly.

"Who?"

"A woman called Donna Giulietta."

"Friend of yours?" asked Marco dryly.

"Too much so, and too little," Casanova replied fervently. "I had the misfortune to please her too much and to offend her beyond forgiveness. If I had not been over-confident I should have taken more precautions against her . . . But you, Marco? Why didn't you go with Henriette, or escape by yourself?"

"I am a patrician," said Marco, "and my father is a member of the Grand Council. If I had fled, it would have proclaimed my guilt, and our name would have been stricken from the Golden Book. Bragadin urged me to stay, for I naturally did not compromise my father by seeing him. I was arrested at Ca' Bragadin, by the way. But I know from messages that I am only under suspicion, and our name is safe."

"Inestimable treasure!" cried Casanova, who could seldom resist an anti-aristocratic sarcasm when aristocracy was in the ascendant. "But it won't help us to get out of here. When will that iniquitous moon return to Olympus? Oh, that Endymion would whistle this goddess to him post haste!"

But the majestic motions of the heavenly bodies are not to be advanced or retarded by the paltry wishes of insignificant humans, and there was nothing for it but to work at the ropes and, when they were done, to sit conversing as the slow roll of the earth gradually lifted the horizon towards the moon. . . .

"By the way," Marco suddenly interrupted something he was saying, "what do we do when we get out on the leads?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"You haven't any plan?" Marco asked incredulously.

"None whatever."

"Whew!" he whistled softly. "The devil! Do you realize, Giacomo, that one slip on those steep leads and we smash ourselves to bits on the stones below or crash into the canal?"

"We mustn't slip," said Casanova coolly.

"I wish I'd been born a Swiss," said Marco.

"Why?" Casanova asked in some astonishment.

"Because I wouldn't be a State prisoner in the Leads, or, if I were, I'd be used to clambering about on impossible slopes at giddy heights."

"You could remain behind," Casanova suggested.

Marco didn't trouble to answer that one. He said:

"The moon will be down in ten minutes."

Ten minutes later they cautiously pushed aside the lead slab, and Casanova emerged "*a rimirar le stelle*"—to see the stars again—for Dante's words came naturally to an Italian in such a situation. With the ropes coiled round him like an Alpine climber and using his famous iron bar as an alpenstock, Casanova slowly climbed to the roof-top. Settling himself astride, he dropped a length of rope to Marco, braced himself, and held the rope until Marco, panting a little, was seated behind him.

"Well, what next?" Marco asked, after a long pause.

"Don't know," said Casanova, "I must reconnoitre."

And he began cautiously to edge his way along the roof, looking closely for some projection on which to tie his rope, so that they could take the awful risk of going hand over hand down it to the pavement two hundred feet below. But, with unconcern at first, then with annoyance, then with apprehension, and finally with despair, Casanova had to admit that he could find nothing. He searched the whole length of the roof without success, and spent two or three hours in this hopeless search.

So great was his discouragement that he was about to

return to Marco and say there was nothing for them to do but to go back to their cells and take whatever punishment was meted out to them, when his constantly moving eye caught sight of a slight projection in the roof about two-thirds of the way between the roof-tree and the gutter. Climbing cautiously down with his iron bar as alpenstock, he found it to be a small dormer window, and after half an hour's very perilous labour succeeded in levering out its grating and smashing the glass window inside, in doing which he cut his hand. Climbing back to Marco, still sitting patiently astride the roof, he said:

"I've found a way into another part of the building. If we get in there, we may be able to find a way out. Come on."

He lowered Marco carefully on to the dormer window, followed him, and then with the same rope cautiously lowered him inside the window. When Marco reached the floor, he untied the rope, as instructed, and Casanova hauled it up. To his consternation he found the length was nearly fifty feet—far too much for a safe jump.

This again seemed an end to their adventure, with the added misery that they were now separated. But Casanova still did not despair. Calling to Marco to stay where he was he began another search of the roof, and finally came on a ladder which had been left there by some workmen. Dragging this cautiously down he began to insert it in the window, where it stuck, and in struggling to force it down, he slipped and very nearly went over the edge of the roof. He saved himself just in the nick of time, and by a prodigious effort of his great strength managed to get back full length on the leads, where he was seized with cramp, and had to lie still until the pain slowly went away.

At last, by using his iron bar as a lever, he contrived to force the ladder in bit by bit until a joyous call from Marco assured him that the foot had touched the floor and was being held steady. Pitching down the ropes and the bundle of clothes Casanova cautiously descended the ladder, and was rapturously greeted by Marco.

They began to explore the room, which was pitch dark,

and found at one end some iron doors which opened into another room furnished with a table and chairs, and having shuttered windows. The windows when opened showed them nothing but the soft light of the stars and the great bulbs of the cupolas of St. Mark's. So great was Casanova's fatigue from his tremendous efforts at the dormer window that he had to rest; and then, when they started exploring again, he found a small recess with a wooden door, which he managed to force open with his bar. Finally, they got into a long gallery full of papers, which they instantly guessed must be the State archives.

In the darkness neither could see more than a foot or two ahead even dimly, but the touch of the dusty papers in their shelves assured them they had not been mistaken. Their hearts beat fast with excitement as the thought came to both that they had now definitely got out of the prison part of the immense building, and that freedom was now close at hand. Bidding Marco stay still, Casanova groped along the outer wall, seeking for a window, but there was none. Impatiently he made his way to the place where Marco stood, knocking against desks and tables, and then went to the opposite wall where almost at once he came on a tall shuttered window. He felt for and found the shutter hasp, and threw it wide, letting in a faint glow of starlight, and then peered down to see if any outlet to freedom lay that way. They were now so much closer to the ground that with their ropes, descent would have been easy, but Casanova drew back bitterly disappointed—below was nothing but a high-walled courtyard, and beyond that another abutting on the Doge's palace where there were certain to be guards.

"That way is hopeless . . ." he was beginning in a loud whisper when Marco grasped his arm, saying in alarm:

"Hush! Hush!"

Intently both listened, hearing above the beating of their hearts and the surge of the blood-stream in their ears the distinct sound of footsteps moving quickly and lightly away from them, followed by the opening, shutting and locking of a door. It was too dark, in spite of the opened

window, for them to see anything, yet Casanova fancied he had seen a momentary greying of a square of distant shadow at the sound of the opening door.

"Did you hear that?" Marco's awed voice breathed anxiously.

"Yes. It sounded like footsteps," said Casanova, instantly feigning an explanation he did not believe. "It must have been a rat or something."

"But I heard the opening and shutting of a door!"

"Something knocked down! Let's go on."

Cautiously they groped their way forward amid the smell of dust and old papers and stale ink, until they reached the door, which was locked.

"You see!" Marco exclaimed in agitation, "I was right. There was somebody. We're being watched!"

"Keep calm, lad, keep calm," said Casanova soothingly. "It was almost certainly locked long before we left our cells. Don't start imagining things."

"But we're imprisoned here and . . ."

Whatever else Marco was about to say was lost in a loud crack, as Casanova's bar, used as a lever, easily wrenched the lock from the flimsy door. Beyond this were stairs, then a landing and another flight of stairs, and then a large hall. Marco's voice, trembling with excitement, exclaimed:

"The Ducal chancery!"

"You've been here?"

"Often."

"Can we climb down from the windows?"

"Yes, but it would be useless—there are only closed courtyards."

"Then we must try to go on. What have we to pass?"

"Only the chancery door, then a flight of stone steps and the big outer door."

"That's not much after what we've passed."

But it was. The door of the chancery and its lock were of vastly more solid construction than the door to the archives beyond, and Casanova wasted strength and strong language and all the leverage of his bar in vain. They examined the

door carefully, and Casanova noticed that the wide upper panels were thinner than those below.

"We must bash our way through," he said determinedly.

"In this echoing hall? We'll certainly be heard!"

"It's the only chance," Casanova said. "Stand back."

Crash! He sent his pointed bar against the panel like a mixture of a pick and a javelin, and the wood cracked and splintered. Each in turn worked furiously until he was pouring with sweat, and at the end of half an hour they had punched out a hole big enough for a man to climb through. Unluckily it was five feet from the ground, and jagged with hard splinters at the edges which they could not have cleared without a saw.

"Well?" Marco asked as well as he could for panting, as he wiped the streaming sweat from his eyes. "What next? How the devil are we to get through there?"

"Hush!" This time it was Casanova who heard something, and both, as they listened, seemed distinctly to hear footsteps descending the marble stairway and then after a pause the clang of the great outer doorway.

"Is this place haunted?" Casanova asked, the hair of his head bristling at the dread thought of ghosts.

"It well may be," Marco answered, his teeth chattering. "There have been enough crimes committed here to people it with ghosts!"

"Bahl" Casanova pulled himself together. "We're overwrought and imagining things—or there's some sort of echo. We'll push on, there's nothing else to do, and we must hurry. Dawn won't be long now."

"All very well, but how?" asked Marco disconsolately fingering the jagged edge.

"Stools," said Casanova, dragging up two, which he placed one on top of the other. "Put my cloak over the jagged bits and up with you. I'll hold you."

Keeping Marco's weight supported as much as possible, as he edged through the narrow opening, Casanova succeeded in lowering him to the floor on the other side with no more than a few tears and scratches. But now came the much

harder problem of a bigger man getting through, with no aid. A third, rather perilously balanced stool gave him the requisite height to start, and Marco grasped his arms and then his shoulders, to help draw him through and support part of his weight. Nevertheless the passage was not accomplished without terrible jags and tears from the splinters which caused Casanova agonizing pain and profuse bleeding. He left a trail of blood drips behind him on the marble stairs, as they descended, and now faced the very last obstacle between them and freedom.

When Casanova had examined the door as well as he could in the darkness, and noted the beams rather than planks of which it was made, the iron clamps and studs, the ponderous lock, the courage and optimism which had carried him so triumphantly so far, abruptly left him. Gently he put down the bar which had served him so well with a valedictory sort of motion, and seated himself at the foot of the stairs with the calm of complete despair.

"My work is done," he said. "The rest must be left to God and Fate."

"Why!" exclaimed Marco in alarm, bending over him and trying to read his face in the shadows. "Are you too exhausted to go on?"

"No. But I might as well be. We'd need a cannon or a petard to break through that door."

"Is that all that's worrying you?"

"Isn't that enough?"

For answer Marco dragged him to his feet, and then led the way to the extreme right of the big door. There, after rummaging for a little time, he found a key about six inches long which he put into Casanova's hands.

"What's this?"

"My only real contribution to this miracle of an escape," said Marco modestly. "You've done all the rest. It's fitting that you should open the last door, as your courage and wits have surmounted every other obstacle. I've often seen that key. It opens the little postern just in front of you. Let me guide your hand."

Trembling as they were with the enormous excitement of their final success they had some difficulty in fitting the key in the lock, but at last the iron wards fitted, the key turned and the heavy little door, not five feet high, opened slowly inwards, while a breath of delicious night air blew in their faces from the cool piazza.

"Ah!" said Casanova in a whisper, as he stepped out. "Come along, Marco! Come and breathe the air of freedom. We're free, free. . . ."

"Surely you can't mean to leave us so unceremoniously!" said a smooth voice sarcastically in his ear.

Casanova whirled round and found himself face to face with the red Inquisitor, whose hand was already placed as if in affection on the prisoner's shoulder. He whirled up his fist in a desperation of rage and hatred to smash the man's face, but even as he did so he heard the clatter of heels and felt his arms roughly seized and held. The last thought that flashed into his overwrought mind was that they had been watched all along, mocked at and trapped, and then he slumped and fell, a senseless weight of flesh and bone, into the arms of the guards.

3

Casanova's spirit groaned and struggled in the throes of an appalling nightmare. It seemed to him that he had died to this earth, but that he had survived or progressed to another plane of being in which he retained his body—a body exquisitely sensitive to pain along with a spirit able to be wrung to finer anguish than ever possible on earth. In this new and frightful existence he had been plunged at first deep into the darkness and filth and hopeless confusion of Dante's Malbolge, but through centuries of effort and at the cost of prodigies of energy and suffering he had struggled up through circle after circle, until now he had reached a kind of limbo, a sort of no-man's-land between hell and whatever its opposite might be. But there, unhappily, his body, like the body of the lifeless Patroclus—but unlike his, still sentient and exquisitely liable to pain—had become a

prize fiercely contended for in an endless battle between fiends and archangels. Thrilling pains shot through head and chest, racked his weary muscles, while the sharp fiery claws of devils gouged and tugged at his legs.

He groaned aloud, and his aching head moved feebly as some fiend or angel drenched it with pungent acid which stank hideously in his nostrils.

"He's coming to," said the doctor calmly, "have you finished bandaging his legs?"

"Yes," replied a younger man busily working.

"All right. Cover him now, and wipe the aromatic vinegar from his face—I spilled some of it on him. Go and tell Messer Grande he will live but must have rest and good food, and then come back at once. How is young Valieri?"

"Oh, he's all right—this one was the leader," said the young man as he rose to go, "only anxious about his friend."

"Come back as soon as you can—I shall need you."

Casanova opened his eyes, stared round unseeingly, and closed them again. The doctor bent over to watch more closely, and when the eyes opened again they focussed on his face in wonderment and fear. The feverish lips tried to form a word, but the desire had been foreseen, and Casanova's head was supported while he drank eagerly of cool water flavoured with lemon and jasmine. He sighed with pleasure, fell back again on the pillow and closed his eyes. But almost instantly, with returning consciousness, memory pierced him with daggers of fear, suspicion and uncertainty.

"Who are you?" he asked, seizing the man's arms and staring at him as if trying to pierce through deception.

"The doctor," was the quiet reply.

"And where am I? Where am I?" Casanova glanced round the room, trying to recollect it. But this high vaulted room with arched mullioned windows and tapestried walls was utterly unfamiliar to him. Vaguely he noted that it was richly furnished in old-fashioned style, and that the bed he lay on was canopied and pillared.

"Did I escape?" he mused aloud. "Of course I didn't. That brute . . . Doctor! Tell me where I am?"

"You must promise first to be calm, and to take the remedies given you. . . ."

"Of course I promise—but tell me, tell me!"

"In the Doge's palace."

Casanova uttered a terrifying noise, something between a moan and the kind of yell of horror a man utters when he sees himself mutilated in battle. He clapped his hands to his face, and again fell back on his pillow. But almost instantly he sat up, desperately clutching the doctor's arm, and pleading wildly:

"Doctor, I can't stand it! I tell you I can't. I shall go out of my mind, and that I can't bear to think of either. To be a wretched hopeless prisoner, mad or sane . . . Oh no, no. Doctor, you are a man, not the fiendish soulless tool of this vile impersonal power. You can give me something to kill me. . . ."

The doctor shook his head.

"You know all doctors take an oath. . . ."

"But this would be saving life, not taking it!" Casanova urged frantically. "Don't you see? How much better to die and . . ."

Meanwhile the doctor had taken a phial from a bag at his feet, and dropped into a small glass of the perfumed water twenty drops of some liquid which curdled in creamy streaks as each one fell. He interrupted Casanova's raving by holding the glass to his lips, saying simply:

"Drink."

"Is it poison?"

"Drink."

Half convinced in his wild state of mind that the doctor had given him poison, Casanova drank eagerly, and then under suasion lay back and shut his eyes. The whirling thoughts and emotions tormenting him began slowly to fade, the dervish dance in his brain slowed, and an exquisite sensation of softly throbbing peace and well-being stole over him, wiping out even the pain of his splinter-wounded thighs and legs, until it was a distant tremor of sensation, which suddenly vanished.

The doctor remained absolutely silent and motionless until Casanova was fully asleep, and then soundlessly glided with his equipment to the door in time to stop his returning assistant from entering. They talked in the ante-chamber in whispers.

"He is in a bad mental state," the doctor whispered. "I had to give the strongest sedative I dared. Much now will depend on what they do to him. He thinks he'll go mad if they put him back in prison, and I daresay he's right. What did Messer Grande have to say to my message?"

"Just nodded," answered the assistant, "and said measures would be taken. We are to stay with the man until he recovers, and above all see he does himself no harm."

"What!" exclaimed the doctor indignantly, "we are not nurses—or jailers either!"

The assistant smiled grimly.

"It appears that this patient is of particular interest to the Republic, and that in this case we are to consider ourselves—retained," he emphasized the ambiguity of the last word by pointing to the heavy bars across the graceful Gothic windows. The doctor's eyes glowed with indignation.

"But my patients! My liberty!"

"What is liberty?" the younger man asked cynically. "Freedom from breath? As to ourselves—he emphasized that we shall lose nothing."

The doctor had recovered himself, and merely shrugged.

"Shall I take the first watch, or will you?" he asked.

The task they had been compelled to undertake was far from easy, and the greatest obstacle to the patient's recovery was the patient himself. For the first two or three days his despair and hatred of life were so violent that they had to drug him with narcotics. When it became dangerous to give him any more such drugs and he recovered his will power, they had tussle after tussle to prevent his tearing off his bandages, trying to do away with himself in one way or another, and then to coax or force him to eat and drink. Both men were worn out and ready to confess to the government that the case was hopeless, when Casanova's innate physical

vigour triumphed over mental depression. Suddenly he asked for food and wine, ate and drank heartily, slept, and woke to eat again. The younger doctor looked at his master and saw that the patient was on the way to recovery.

Ten days had passed since the sensational escape and bitterly ironical rearrest. It was the realization that his careful plans had been known to the Inquisitors, that Lorenzo had either discovered Marco's tunnellings or, more likely, had carried the pricked books to be read, which maddened Casanova and for days made him want to kill himself. The ridicule which, he felt, covered a man who had been so duped, was what he couldn't endure. Evidently, they had known everything down to the time set for the attempt, and the footsteps they had heard had been those of guards set to watch them. It had been a form of torture, the torture by hope said to have been used by the Spanish Inquisition. After two such failures, what could be hoped? Casanova fell back into a kind of animal apathy, not quite strong-willed enough to starve himself to death, and not degraded enough to want to live on year after year a prisoned husk of a man dead to the world. The best he could do was to try not to think—to forget Marco and Henriette, the world of women and gaming he had known, the whole adventurous life of movement and pleasure. To achieve this end, he asked for books and books and more books, and plunged himself into reading from the moment he awoke until his weary eyes dropped into sleep. It was easy enough to obey the doctor's orders to stay in bed, for the bed was no prison bed, but comfortable, even luxurious, and he had nothing to get up for.

It was early afternoon, and Casanova was deep in a history of Rome, when the door of his room was suddenly opened and a man entered. He was dressed with all the care and splendour of a Venetian patrician, high-heeled shoes and silk stockings, velvet breeches and brocaded coat and doublet, curled and powdered wig, immaculate lace, clouded cane, gold snuff-box. He bowed with careless grace, and only as the visitor looked round for a chair did Casanova realize

with an immense shock that this debonair patrician was no other than the Red Inquisitor.

"I trust you are feeling better, Casanova, and that you will excuse my seating myself," the Inquisitor said affably.

A red flush of anger crept over Casanova's cheeks as his eyes hardened and he clenched his fists.

"You are a bold man, Messer, to trust yourself alone with one you have injured so deeply," he said in a deep voice. "I am not such an invalid that I could not strangle you with my bare hands."

The Inquisitor took snuff with calm deliberation, flicked the grains from his sleeve, tapped his nostrils lightly with a lace handkerchief, hemmed tranquilly and answered:

"It is for that reason that I visit you as a gentleman of Venice, and not in my robes of office."

"The clothes make no difference to me," Casanova said grimly.

"Pardon me, although I have not abandoned my position, and cannot so do until my term of office expires, I come in an altogether different role."

"And as what, pray?"

"As ambassador from the Most Serene Republic."

Casanova gave a short hoarse laugh, like a dog's bark, and then said sourly:

"If this is meant as a joke it's a silly one. If not, I don't understand you."

The Inquisitor hemmed again.

"First, I am charged by the Council of Ten to congratulate you."

"Congra . . . the Ten . . . ?" Casanova stammered.

"Certainly. Signor Casanova, you are a Venetian. You know the thousand-year history of our country, you know it as it was and as it is. And you know that—between ourselves of course—our dear country no longer breeds men of the calibre that once made it feared and famous. We have still the great names of Dandolo and Morosini, but their virtues have fled. . . ."

"Well?" Casanova asked, as there was a slight pause.

"Well, a few days ago you attempted an escape. . . ."

Casanova's face darkened with a scowl of hatred as he asked sneeringly:

"And the Ten send me congratulations on my success? Ah! But for treachery and eavesdropping, you'd never have caught me."

"True enough," the Inquisitor waved an elegant hand. "We read all your messages to Valieri except perhaps two or three of the earliest. But in the first place we have learned a lot from your attempt—the prison system will be reorganized—and in the second place not a man among us believed it was possible for a human being to do what you did. . . ."

"What is the drift of all this?" Casanova asked impatiently. "What is the use of such speeches to me, even if I believe in their sincerity?"

"They are certainly sincere," the Inquisitor answered, "you don't give me time to explain."

"There is more between us than can be explained away by a few meaningless compliments," said Casanova sitting up in bed and speaking with great energy. "It is easy enough for you to forgive yourselves magnanimously the injuries you have done me, but not so easy for me. You arrest me without making any charge, interrogate me for four hours again without making any charge, then imprison me for a year and a half, still without making any charge. Then when I very nearly succeed in breaking out of your chains, you come to me and tell me I am a fine fellow. That's more than I claim. I admit I am a gambler, a profligate, and that I sometimes talk rashly. But I am neither a traitor to my country nor a rival for the fame of Morosini and Dandolo!"

"Very well put," said the Inquisitor with an approving pinch of snuff, while Casanova dropped back on his pillow wearied by his own vehemence. "But now give *me* leave to speak. We arrested you by virtue of powers vested in us by the laws of Venice, because a denunciation made personally by a respectable person accused you of direct participation in a plot against Venice—nothing less than to gain possession of our key fortresses along the Adriatic by treachery and

corruption of their commanders, and to hand these essential defences over to our enemies the Austrians."

"So that was what Donna Giulietta invented by way of revenge, was it?" Casanova interrupted, scowling. "What made you believe such nonsense?"

"Venice never admits or denies the identity of a denouncer," the Inquisitor said coolly. "As to the latter part of your remark it would have been folly on our part not to investigate, especially since we had other evidence—vague and unsatisfactory, I admit—that there was such a plot. But the whole thing is a mystery. Either we have been grossly misinformed, or we are dealing with exceptionally cunning and cautious persons, who employ one or more agents it has so far proved impossible to detect."

"But what have I to do with this?" Casanova asked bitterly, "seeing I know nothing whatever about it, except for what you now tell me?"

"Like all committees, we have our little differences of opinion," said the Inquisitor composedly, "from the first I always maintained you were innocent, but my colleagues thought otherwise. Then, the fact that nothing happened about the Dalmatian and Albanian forts, which I interpreted in your favour, they pointed out might have been due to our having caught the master plotter by catching you."

"I fear I have purchased too high their Excellencies' good opinion of my capacities for intrigue," said Casanova. "Prison is a wonderful solvent of a man's vanity."

"So they tell me," said the Inquisitor, with his habitual dive at the snuff-box. "To continue—everything has now been quiet for over a year—a year and a half, is it?" he interjected, as Casanova made a movement of protest. "But we have now received a piece of information that interests you as well as us. . . ."

"Interests me?"

"It seems that you were sacrificed to cover up someone else, the real agent we thought we had captured when we arrested you. A prime mover in all this is the envoy of a foreign power, against whom of course we can do nothing

openly without provoking a war, which needless to say we could not afford to do. It appears that in some manner you offended or thwarted him and that he has a personal animosity to you—by the way, wasn't there a young woman with you in the Valieri gondola that day?"

"Yes."

"What happened to her?"

"Marco put her ashore near Mestre, and supposes she got out of Venetian territory."

"That is what he says," the Inquisitor remarked, nodding sagely, "you have either prepared for everything with great skill, or—extraordinary fact—you may be telling the truth . . . But to return to matters of importance—this agent for whose safety you were sacrificed by the —er—the gentleman you crossed in . . . what was I going to say?—anyway, this agent, we believe, is coming to a village in the Swiss Grisons for a conference."

"Well," said Casanova impatiently, "why don't you send some of your ruffians to cut his throat?"

"We have done that sort of thing before, of course," the Inquisitor admitted calmly, "but less often with success than we like or you might suppose. In this case there are even graver objections. The Grisons are in alliance with the Empire. The Empire takes a particular interest in this—creature. No, we think it better that you should go and persuade the agent to cross our territory where we can arrest. . . ."

"I!" Casanova interrupted in amazement, "but what can I do? Why should you send *me*?"

The Inquisitor smiled.

"I can tell you that easily," he said. "We have realized that the probable cause for our unsuccess in this affair is our failure to realize that this agent might be a woman."

"Impossible!"

"Not in the least," the Inquisitor scoffed. "Women are constantly employed in these secret political—er—manoeuvres. The Court of France, England and the Hollanders constantly do so. We, who have so much to do with the Papacy and the

Turks—two somewhat masculine powers—have less experience of this sort. In any event, this is the suggestion now made to us by some of our observers. Now, it occurred to me that the best way to lure a woman over our frontier without violence would be to send the most accomplished charmer of the age. . . .”

“You flatter me,” said Casanova sourly.

“Not a bit, not a bit, the sober truth. The task so difficult for another is easy for you—you have but to dazzle her, make her yours, and bring her to a point we shall indicate, where she may be arrested in peace, and you, of course, will never see her again.”

“A despicable enterprise,” said Casanova.

“But preferable to life imprisonment in the Wells, Signor Casanova; for be assured we should not again trust you to the easy ward of the Leads, even with our new system. And, the lives of those who inhabit the Wells are not habitually prolonged.”

Casanova bit his lip and sulked a moment. The offer seemed to him degrading, but the Wells—those dreaded semi-underground cells in the wet subsoil of Venice, swarming with rats, lightless, fever-stricken. . . .

“Go on,” he said, sullenly.

“Ah, I thought you would accept,” the Inquisitor said cynically. “But, in that case, there is not much to say, except for the arrangement of details, which can be gone into later. . . .”

“But how shall I recognize this . . . this person?” Casanova asked, swallowing down his dislike.

“It will not be hard to find a stranger and a foreigner in the one small inn of a remote village of the Grisons. This place is at the foot of the Stelvio Pass, though not on the main road—cunningly chosen, you see. In any case you may recognize the ‘person’ as someone you know.”

“I recognize her?” Casanova was dumbfounded. “How could that possibly be?”

“My dear Casanova!” The Inquisitor took snuff over this little bit of mirth, “have you not realized yet that some ladies

while welcoming advances of a certain kind are extremely resentful if they are abandoned, or cut short before it is their wish? You yourself seemed to think that—I am making no admission or denial, you understand—that your denouncer was a woman. . . .”

If one can suppose such an impossibility as a flash of lightning indefinitely prolonged which brings out clearly every feature of a dimly discerned country—such was this last speech of the Inquisitor to Casanova. Like all prisoners, he had brooded long and bitterly and in closest detail over the circumstances of his arrest and the reasons for it. The meeting with Donna Giulietta’s gondola on the Ascension Day regatta of the Bucintoro was, in view of their relations, pretty clear—to Casanova’s mind, decisive—evidence that Donna Giulietta had denounced him; and now the Inquisitor by his very elaboration of disclaimers seemed to admit it. But the puzzle had always been how she had managed so quickly to make the denunciation. Now, following this clue of the Inquisitor, she must have had another motive besides that of mere jealousy and revenge. She was providing for her own safety. In Rome she had the reputation of dabbling deep in political intrigue of all kinds, though, as such things had little interest for him, Casanova had never bothered about it. But if all along she had been the secret agent who was trying to get possession of the Dalmatian forts—it explained everything—her presence in Florence and in Venice, among other things. As is the habit of such persons, she would have acquaintances among the innumerable minor spies of the enemy, selling or giving them unimportant items of real information, betraying inconvenient or unessential persons, in order to work more securely. Finding that some suspicion of what was going on had reached the Venetian government—and Casanova now remembered that Marco had said something about it when he returned to Venice—Donna Giulietta had gone instantly to one of these secret vermin with her supposedly most important information. And now he had the opportunity to be revenged on her in the most appropriate way—by delivering her, in her turn, to the justice and

mercy of the Venetian State Inquisitors. . . .

There was a wolfish gleam in his eyes, as he said:

"I accept the mission. When must I start? What are my instructions?"

"You must get well first," said the Inquisitor rising, and brushing away the snuff grains he had dropped on his clothes during this long talk. "As soon as the doctor reports you completely recovered—say, in two or three days—we shall have another interview to complete your instructions. If you succeed in this arrest or kidnapping or whatever you choose to call it, without scandal or loss of life to the protagonist (shall I call her?), you have a reward of a thousand sequins, a confidential post under the government . . . You were going to say something?"

It had been on the tip of Casanova's tongue to say that instead of a money reward he would infinitely prefer to have the spy system of the Republic put at his disposal to find Henriette—for in the long watches of his prison life it had always seemed to him that even liberty would not long be valuable without her. And then the thought came to him that with his appointment to a permanent post she could abandon the will-o'-the-wisp of her inheritance, and he could find her again himself. . . .

"No," he said aloud, "it was nothing—merely to ask if the post would be permanent?"

"Of course." The Inquisitor turned to go, and then came back. His voice as he spoke was level and pleasant, but there was a dreadful consciousness of power under it. "I should add that the Venetian Government expects that you will obey orders implicitly. You are apt to be reckless, Casanova, so I think it friendly to remind you that the government has a long and powerful arm . . . Farewell for the present."

"Two or three days" the Red Inquisitor had said, and if Casanova found them intolerably long who will wonder?

After eighteen months in prison, so much of it in solitary confinement, followed by the hopes, fears and exertions of his escape and the crushing despair of his recapture at the very moment of success, he was in a highly nervous state of mind and, not unnaturally, wondered whether the visit from the Inquisitor, the complete reversal of attitude on the part of the Three, the offer of this strange and difficult mission and its rewards if successful, might not be one more diabolically ingenious form of torture. He tried hard to persuade the doctor, who still visited him daily, to certify him as fit to travel immediately.

"My dear sir," said the doctor with a shrug, "I understand your impatience to be gone. It is only equalled by my own wish to see you well and to be released from further attendance in a place which makes me shiver—out of respect for our noble Doge, you understand! But I have no more influence with our State Inquisitors than the meanest fisherman at Malamocco, and they have determined the exact hour of your release—or rather the hour when you are to be taken from here for a last interview with the Red Inquisitor. That is at nine o'clock tomorrow evening. Until then I advise you to rest, to eat heartily, and to compose your mind. You have been dangerously near an inflammation of the brain. . . ."

"I wish I trusted them," Casanova muttered half to himself.

"It is useless to mistrust them," the doctor retorted. "And why should you? From my instructions I infer that for some reason they wish you to be as well and strong as possible—and the only reason they could want that would be because they hope for some service from you."

The doctor's common-sense remark in some degree calmed and convinced Casanova, though in sleepless hours—and he had several—he could still work himself into a lather of mistrust. But, as one would expect of him, his thoughts were almost entirely about women. Of Rosaura he hardly thought at all, except to wonder what had happened to her and to hope that all was well with her. Marietta came into his mind more persistently. For some reasons the hours with

her in Florence recurred to his mind with great vividness, and he wished that he had not broken with her so violently and so selfishly—after all, from what Henriette had said, Marietta had behaved with great delicacy and sweetness. Henriette . . .

Well, it is almost literally true to say that for the first day and night of his feverish wait for release scarcely any period of five minutes elapsed without his thinking of Henriette, and that at times he thought of her continuously. This was a contrast to his prison days when in the early months he had striven not to think of her, because such memories were too tantalizing and painful, while in the later months she had receded from his waking thoughts as he became wholly absorbed in escape plans. Now, with increased sharpness and anxiety, he once more tried to imagine her fate, and went over the obvious questions which had so often tormented him in the early weeks. How had she escaped? Where had she gone? What had she done since that abrupt and tragical parting? Had she succeeded in her ambition? Had she forgotten him? Had she a new lover? If he got free, how should he find her again . . . ?

On the morning of the second day, after the doctor had left, Casanova received a visit from an officer of the State Inquisition who informed him courteously that the Red Inquisitor would see him at nine and that he would be leaving immediately afterwards. This message, confirming what the doctor had said, might of course have been merely part of the plot, if he was still undergoing the torture by hope; but, luckily for his peace of mind during the day, Casanova chose to take the information at its face value. The prospect of immediate release and of soon meeting Donna Giulietta in such curious circumstances, turned his thoughts much more on to her than on to Henriette.

Casanova had long since come to the conclusion that the silliest thing he had ever done in his life was to abandon Donna Giulietta at a moment so interesting, merely to follow the wave of Henriette's hand. It is true that the episode had a romantic quality about it, but it had made an enemy and in

so doing had made Casanova's task the more difficult, though giving him the harsh motive of revenge. Yet if he had been less impulsive, if he had stayed to make Donna Giulietta his mistress, how much might have been avoided! Henriette would never have known, he could have found some excuse to satisfy Donna Giulietta for leaving Rome in time to keep the appointment with Henriette, and he would never have run into the fight on the Tuscan frontier or have been involved in the whole embarrassing and still puzzling episode of Henriette's travelling in male disguise. . . .

If he had made that mistake in the past, Casanova was determined not to repeat it. Though he hated the woman with a bitter hatred, as the direct cause of his long imprisonment and suffering, and of his separation—perhaps for ever—from Henriette, he nevertheless planned to make her his mistress as a first step in his revenge, and then to use that fact as a means of bringing her to the place where she would be arrested and the Republic of Venice would take most ample vengeance for them both. . . .

He was still going round and round this mill of thought, like the proverbial horse with bandaged eyes, when nine o'clock was struck by the clock over the Calle dei Fabbri, and at the very moment the same young officer entered with military punctuality. He had a soldier with him, not to guard Casanova but to carry his bundle of effects, and conducted his prisoner, chatting amiably the while, through a labyrinth of passages, stairways and suites of rooms, until they came to a door guarded by two armed men who challenged, and were given the password. The officer knocked, a voice answered, and—Casanova found himself face to face with the Red Inquisitor, once more in his robes of office, who was writing at a desk. With courtesy he immediately put down his pen, rose to shake hands with his former victim, and made him sit down.

"You look better," he said.

"Hope is a good tonic," said Casanova with a slightly wry smile, "though I've had rather too much of it."

"You think realization better? You're quite right. Now,

there is no more we need say. If you fail honestly in your mission, you have nothing to fear, but you will naturally not be rewarded. If you betray us, remember once more the Republic of Venice still has a long arm . . . Have you any money?"

"A few sequins left over from the monthly six Senator Bragadin allowed me."

"Ah! He sent you money? Of course, I remember now. A good friend of yours, but a bit of a fool, a bit weak in the head about matters he understands no more than anyone else—perhaps they all go together. Take this purse."

It was a heavy one, as Casanova perceived.

"There are two hundred sequins," said the Inquisitor. "For your expenses, and possible bribes—remember a bribe is nearly always more efficacious than a blow and usually cheaper. Have you thought out any plan of approaching the—prisoner to be?"

"I've thought of several," said Casanova confidently, "but I mean not to bind myself to any one beforehand—I shall judge the possibilities when I see the situation, and act accordingly."

"Good. That's what we like. An intelligent man who has brains and can use them and hold his tongue. Remember that description, Casanova. As to your prey, I can give you no description except that from an intercepted letter in cipher—which of course was sent on after being copied—we judged it must be a woman. The name of the village and the inn are written here, together with a map and an itinerary." The Inquisitor handed him several folded papers. "You can study them tomorrow, and then destroy them. You understand?"

"Yes."

"Here is your passport. You are travelling as Giacomo Licinio, a dealer in wines, going to the Valtelline to purchase a few barrels of their special vintage for Venetian connoisseurs. The physical description of course fits you accurately. That clear?"

"Perfectly."

"I put your real Christian name. We have found that an aid in disguising identity. A half truth is usually so much more deceptive than a whole lie. The same principle will be applied to your leaving here. The rumour of your escape has of course filled Venice for days, with embellishments and travesties of the kind always invented by human asses and believed by them. The story has been printed in various untrue forms all over Europe. It could not be denied that something had happened, because of the damage you did to the door of the chancery which could not be concealed. At first we said nothing, then as soon as it was decided to release you we said at once that you had escaped. This at once cast discredit on the stories that you had escaped, for nobody ever expects a government to tell the truth in a case like this. As several days have elapsed and all the seventy-three imposters pretending to be Giacomo Casanova have been proved not to be, everybody is now firmly convinced that the whole thing is an absurd yarn, and that there never was an escape or an attempt at an escape. This is a slur on your fame, but will greatly aid your mission, and so benefit your pocket. . . ."

Casanova bowed at this tribute and promise.

"When you return, we shall of course liberate Giacomo Casanova. Meanwhile, you will have to go cautiously, especially until you are well away from Venice and any district where you may be recognized. Have a sore throat, and keep your face well muffled. A post-chaise is waiting for you at Mestre, and a gondola at the prison wharf . . . Is there anything you want to ask?"

"Yes. Where am I to take the—er—prisoner to be?"

"It is marked in the instructions and on the map I gave you. Anything else?"

"Yes. How am I to communicate with the . . ."

"Do nothing of the kind," the Inquisitor interrupted swiftly. "Never write or even send messages in these affairs if you can avoid them. The men, all picked agents, will wait there patiently until you arrive—with your prey, we feel confident. Farewell."

Casanova's bow was addressed to a dark head already bent over the pile of documents on the table. As he left the room and closed the door behind him, he felt his heart give a leap of apprehension as he found himself facing the young officer, who, now, was accompanied by two men. Could it be, Casanova asked himself, that in spite of his apparent frankness and trust the Inquisitor had been playing with him once more, and that this third man had been joined to the others to help in rearresting him?

The third man, who had been standing in the shadow of the dimly lighted corridor, now moved forward; and to Casanova's mingled shame and delight was revealed as Marco—Marco who had suffered imprisonment merely because he was a friend and whose liberty Casanova had never thought to ask for as one condition of his performing the rather odious service asked as the price of freedom.

"Giacomo!"

"Marco!"

The two men clasped hands, and then embraced, after the fashion of the South, with a shedding of facile tears. The young officer touched Casanova's arm.

"If you will come to this room, sir, you may have ten minutes alone with your friend. You must then start your journey."

Casanova's first question when they had exhausted the exclamations of emotion natural in their situation, was:

"What is happening to you, Marco?"

"I am to be released, with an indemnity and a sort of apology, on condition that I spend a year in Padua and that my father and Bragadin engage to produce me at any time."

"Can you ever forgive me for having caused all your suffering here?"

"It was not your fault," said Marco warmly, "but the fault of this vile corrupt Republic which . . ."

"Hush!" said Casanova. "You might be heard. We're not out of the trap yet, and I suspect it was talk of that kind on my part that helped to get us in. How is the old Senator? Have you seen him?"

"Bragadin? Yes, I saw him, and he looked exactly as when we saw him last—lamenting that you had not more reverently consulted Solomon's Key."

"The old donkey!" Casanova laughed, and then frowned. "But why didn't he ask to see me?"

"He did, but they wouldn't allow it."

"Why? Oh, well, never mind. Time is short. One other question—have you any hint or guess about the whereabouts of Henriette?"

Marco shook his head.

"Not the slightest. I had the greatest difficulty in persuading her to escape. She kept wanting to give herself up, saying she was the cause of your imprisonment, and that if they had her, you might be released. When she did finally agree to get out of Venetian territory, she refused to give any address, saying that if and when you were released she'd be certain to hear of it. . . ."

"Time is up, gentlemen," said the young officer's voice. "I am sorry to disturb you, but my orders are peremptory. Signor Casanova, the gondola is ready."

A warm farewell to Marco, a journey along corridors and down stairs, the sudden opening of a door, and Casanova felt the fresh night air of Venice breathe on his face. The young officer took his arm to guide him through the darkness to the edge of the landing place, explaining in a whisper that his departure was to be made in silence and darkness to be as secret as possible. He shook Casanova's hand, helped him into the *felze*, and then the soft indescribable glide of the gondola carried the prisoner away from the place of so much misery and vain courage.

It is hopeless for anyone who has not endured imprisonment of some sort to try to understand the hysterical rapture which began flooding through Casanova, as the gondola moved swiftly towards the Giudecca and then in the direction of the mainland. The killing routine, the insipid endless days, the wretched nights of prison still threatened him with their poisonous memories and he wept silently in the darkness to think that at last he was delivered from them and with regret

that so much of precious youth had been wasted. It seemed to him that nothing that could now happen to him would really hurt him deeply, that so long as he kept free of those abominable walls he would not again allow himself to feel unhappy about anything.

Yet such was his distrust that twice, when for some reason the gondola made or seemed to make a course not directly towards Mestre, the maddening thought came back to him that the infernal Inquisition might be playing cat and mouse with him. The suspicion did not fall away from him until he was safely landed and transferred to a guide who carried for him a couple of valises which, unknown to Casanova, had been filled with clothes and other necessities by order of the Three. As he watched the bags being stowed away in the travelling carriage which was to take him to the Grisons, Casanova thought grimly that the Three indeed seemed to overlook no detail, however insignificant. Imagine thinking of the comfort of a man whom they had tortured for eighteen months on mere unfounded suspicion . . . !

These and many another changing thought and swirling emotion kept Casanova half awake as he tried to doze to the once familiar but now ecstatically new sensation of rolling and lurching over the road behind a pair of strong horses. Each time they stopped at a posting station, he got out and stamped about a little, ostensibly to keep his circulation going, actually for the pleasure of feeling the earth under his feet again, and for the chance of exchanging a word with an ostler or post-boy or sleepy landlord—anyone who was not a jailer or an Inquisitor or any way connected with the prison of the Leads. And once he made the nearest to a prayer he had breathed for many a year—a sort of supplication for all those still imprisoned in those cells of iniquity and tyranny.

He fell asleep to the long rumble of wheels, and woke to find a world of cold white fog through which dripping yellow-leaved trees and white houses and passing vehicles loomed vaguely and strangely. Then a red ball shone dimly through the white smoky air, grew brighter and yellower as the mist thinned and drifted in ragged lines and settled in

chill hollows and under the shadow of steep hills; and finally the gold sun and blue sky of a glowing autumn day declared themselves triumphantly. He forgot his mission and his wrongs, his loves, himself, in the sheer sensation of freedom and almost wished that life held nothing but the pleasures of an endless journey away from the Leads of Venice.

Indeed it was afternoon when the shadows of mountains, the dazzle of snow peaks and fields, the chill of ever colder air, and the slower pace of the carriage, brought him back to the realities and, for the first time, the study of his maps and instructions which he had been carrying carelessly folded in his pocket. But his usual fertile mind was a blank—whether from the cramping of imprisonment or distaste at his mission or mere contrariness, he could not decide. At all events, so far from making any plans for the ensnaring of Donna Giulietta and getting her into the hands of the Venetian secret police, he thrust the papers back in his pocket, and dozed and shivered a little with cold until nightfall and the announcement by his postillion that they had reached a village—the nearest on the main road to the place where he was to find her. And when he descended from his carriage, weary, stiff and cold from the journey, his action was not that of a very eager or conscientious political agent—he ordered the best bedroom with the best supper and the best wine and the best fire the place afforded, dined sumptuously and at his ease, and went to bed and a long dreamless sleep.

It was his first night of freedom, for even in the carriage as it rumbled through the darkness Casanova had felt the power of the Three accompanying him like an unspoken but perpetual threat. Indeed, as he indulged himself in luxuries he had been deprived of for so long, he felt this threat, the more so since the very freedom he was tasting again with such gusto was conditional. He had an ugly service to perform before it was earned; and, if he had not known the strange tenacity of vengeance of the Venetian State, he would have wondered why they trusted him out of their dominions. It could come even then, he decided, from a wish to make some atonement for his imprisonment, to

let him show that he was the loyal citizen he claimed. As to the luxuries he gratified himself with so lavishly, they were the symbols of his recovered dignity—for what is more abject than a prisoner whose every movement and minute are regulated by stony-hearted jailers or still more stony-hearted rules? Small wonder then that Casanova indulged immediately in luxuries which proved his emancipation.

Lying late in bed was, however, not one of them. Too many mornings of bitter winter he had lain in his miserable prison bed trying to keep warm, too many other days he had spent there heart-sick and anxious, trying to hide the ingenious but feeble tools of escape. So, because staying in bed was for him a prison habit, he was up early, calling hungrily for breakfast, joking with the maids, asking questions of the stablemen and ostlers. The cold of autumn was settling down on those mountainous regions, so that it was pleasant to breakfast by a blazing fire, to idle and dream away the time. Yet it was all a little less pleasant than he had anticipated because he knew that somehow that day he had got to find his way over to the village where Donna Giulietta was in hiding and—here came the difficulty—discover some plausible pretext for being taken in at a small wayside ale or wine house which would almost certainly have been paid to allow nobody in.

The urgency of the problem was only equalled by the strange apathy and inertia which fell upon Casanova whenever he thought of it, as if all his ingenuity and fertile scheming had been exhausted by the escape from the Leads. After breakfast, when the sun broke through the mist and brought the sorrowing autumn world a remorseful after-gift of warmth, he strolled out into the village, past the church and the wineshop and the smithy to the open country, following the main road as it began to wind up towards the snowy slopes of the Alps. The sound of cow-bells came mournfully through the still misty air, and far away he heard someone playing an age-old complaint on a little pipe. Further on he came to a swift-running Alpine stream, and amused his vacant mind by throwing stones into it.

None of these things gave him the ghost of an idea, and after a couple of hours of senseless loitering he slowly made his way back to the village, pausing in the vacancy of his time and mind to watch the farrier who was beginning to strip the worn shoes from a horse before cutting the hoofs and refitting them with new shoes. It was then that a thought hit Casanova, and from a dull clod he became instantly animated, tense with purpose.

In his easy way he entered into conversation with the smith, and persuaded him to sell at some absurdly high price a pair of the strong pincers which he used to pull out the horse-shoe nails. Stowing this carefully in his pocket Casanova returned at once to the inn, paid three days rent of his room in advance, then announced that he needed a little exercise and would buy a horse. Much as he had risen in the landlord's esteem by his munificence, Casanova now sank by insisting on buying a rather inferior animal, instead of the really strong one the landlord urged him to buy. But Casanova had his eyes on something besides the horse's good points.

After lunch he lay down and slept and then, towards the middle of the autumn afternoon, set out on his new purchase, riding beside the main road until he was well out of sight of the village. He then studied his map carefully, struck across country, found a lane, followed it for two or three miles, and from the rather difficult dialect of a field worker he met guessed rather than heard that he had found the place he wanted. Indeed, a sudden turn of the lane brought him to the little inn which had been described to him inconveniently soon; but without attracting any notice Casanova rode on, not without a curious sidelong glance at the place which hid Donna Giulietta. He rode on until he came to a little wood of aspens and willows with a stream running beside them.

His next actions suggested insanity, rather than a man of sense and reason. First of all he threw away his hat, then he muddied his cloak and one side of his horse. Taking out the blacksmith's pincers he succeeded, after a good deal of trouble to himself and much snorting on the part of his other-

wise docile horse, in removing the shoe from its off foreleg. Searching about he found a sharp flint and, having carefully tied the horse, deliberately made superficial cuts in his knees and opened them so that they bled freely, to suggest that there had been a fall. He then equally ruthlessly cut his own forehead and hand, dabbled a white silk handkerchief in as much blood as he could collect, tied it round his head bloody side out, and put his left arm in a sling.

In this lugubrious state, followed by the shoeless horse which limped as if it were lame, Casanova presented himself at the inn, and asked for lodging.

"We take nobody today—full up," said the man in surly tones, shutting the door in his face.

But Casanova was not so easily put off. After a wait he went round to the back where he found a red-cheeked country woman feeding geese. To her pity he appealed with a pathetic eloquence peculiar to himself.

"It's not for myself, madame," he said, courteously giving her a title of respect she seldom indeed heard, "but for this poor animal by whose fall I've cracked my poor pate and sprained my arm—but never mind that, I fear my old Giuseppe has broken both knees. Can I give him the agony of walking him six or seven miles in such a state? God forbid. I can see by your face that you are kind, and I warrant you understand animals. Suffer me to leave him here at least till tomorrow. . . ."

And as he said this, Casanova put a gold piece in her hand. The woman hesitated, looked at him with a doubtful smile, and then said:

"There's the stable."

Casanova followed her directing finger, bedded down and foddered the horse with a great deal of fuss, such as he had noted in those who pretended to love horse-flesh more than their own; and then returned to the little farm-yard. It was now almost dusk, and the woman was standing in the doorway to her kitchen.

"That's excellent," said Casanova, rubbing his hands, "and now that we've fed and sheltered the important animal,

how about the poor rider. Pest! I'm hungry, and I wager you're a good cook."

"My husband says no one's to come until she's gone," she answered, shaking her head, and then looked scared as one who has given away a secret.

"Ahl But I wager his wife has the last word in most things," Casanova answered, with a knowing wink; and then, changing his tone, "you won't leave me to lie under the stars like a heathen, when I'm a Christian man and you're a Christian woman? All I ask is a bite of your own dinner and a dry nook to lie down. Here . . ." He put another gold piece in her hand. "Can't you send the good man to buy something, and smuggle me in? It'll be another sequin in your pocket tomorrow, and he'll never know."

The gold and the Casanova wheedle did their work, and the excellent woman began to feel what a shame it was that such a good-looking, well-spoken, respectful man, who must be a gentleman by his speech and generous ways, should be left out in the cold because her husband had a mind to obey that baggage in the two front rooms. . . .

Half an hour later, as he stood under the shadow of the stable, Casanova heard rather than saw the husband start off down the road, cursing aloud, and two minutes later he was in the house, and taken to a small but clean enough bedroom—under the roof once more, Casanova thought to himself with grim humour as he noticed the thatch projecting over the window.

"I'll be quiet as a mouse," he promised. "And not stir till morning. God bless you!"

She lingered a minute, with urgent whispers binding him to silence and secrecy, and comely as she was Casanova might have been tempted to a kiss, if the situation had been less urgent. But, duty is duty, and he let her go.

What next?

Casanova was improvising—a step at a time. The main thing had been to get into the house. Now that he had managed that, the next point was to find Donna Giulietta. She might be out, of course. She might not be alone. She

would probably order him out of the house, and call for help . . . It had to be risked. If he could find her before the surly landlord returned, it would be up to the Casanova charm to work on her so that she not only allowed him to stay, but found excuses for his being there.

He blew out the farthing dip the woman had given him to go to bed with, warning him it must be extinguished within fifteen minutes—when she expected her husband back. Allowing for her curtailing the time, Casanova judged he had twenty minutes to half an hour, as he slowly and noiselessly felt his way down the dark narrow stair. He came to a landing, from which stairs descended to the ground floor, while a passage ran right and left, evidently serving the four or five rooms of the little inn. Casanova listened intently, and heard nothing. He crept cautiously along the passage to his right, cursing under his breath at a creaking board, and listened at each door. Nothing.

He returned to the landing, and then explored the other passage. Almost at once his heart thumped hard, and he almost snapped his fingers with pleasure—there under the door but hidden by a mat unless you were close to it was a needle-thin but vivid line of light. This was the room! And, as there was a light, she was certainly there. With his hand on the old-fashioned latch which in this rustic dwelling took the place of a door-knob, Casanova stood listening, holding his breath. A gleam came into his eyes as the oppressive silence was broken by the sound of logs falling, then by a faint rustle of skirts and the noise of fire irons, as someone straightened the fire.

Casanova did not move, keeping his ear close to the door, until the cessation of fire sounds, the rustle of the dress and another complete silence seemed to announce that Donna Giulietta had returned to her seat. He counted up to ten, drew a deep breath, then gave a light tap on the door, and without waiting for an answer boldly opened the door and walked in. The woman, who had been seated reading by the lamp, said:

“What is the meaning . . .” then looked up, saw him and turned very pale.

"Giacomol" she exclaimed. "You! How did you . . ." And then: "What is the matter?"

For he stood motionless, staring at her, growing paler and paler as he tried vainly to say something, and then at last a strangely flat tone:

"Henriette."

;

Here was a proof, if anybody needed it, that prison is bad for a man. It may sharpen wits excessively in regard to one or two immediate problems but in general it dulls them and, above all, fogs moral sensibility. Was it not a come-down for Casanova who contemptuously treated soldiers as cut-throats to accept employment as a police spy? A Casanova unbroken by eighteen months of prison, mostly in solitary confinement, would never have agreed to betray into the merciless hands of Venice any woman, let alone one he had almost made his mistress. And his decline had been well displayed by his complicated device for getting into the inn, when a couple of sequins more than he had actually paid probably would have bought him entrance anyway, without making his horse unfit to get him away in an emergency. . . .

Yet none of these things demonstrated so clearly the prison-cramped state of his mind as the inability to do anything but register an almost injured astonishment at finding just that person in this little out-of-the-way inn. His mind dashed itself against the walls of this problem like a frantic bird, which has wandered into a room by an open window it is now unable to distinguish from those with invisible but repelling glass. And, just as the shock of walking into the Inquisitor's arms when he thought himself free had sent Casanova off in a faint, so this newer and in its way equally disconcerting shock made him dizzy. The emotions evoked by so unexpected a meeting with the person he most wanted and least expected to meet took his wits away.

The heart, nevertheless, is sometimes—by no means always—a better counsellor than the brain. Henriette's alarmed question: "What is the matter?" meant among other

things: "Are you going to faint, you who look so distraught and pale?" But instead of answering in words, and bringing to bear that usually active and ingenious brain, Casanova did what any tongue-tied ordinary man in love would have done—he moved quickly forwards, took her into his arms, and kissed her. And she, yielding herself to that familiar embrace—whether in spite of herself or not—acknowledged him thereby as hers. In that meeting of lips these two faulty but suffering lovers paid off the immense debt of eighteen long months of absence and misery—the momentary oblivion and ecstasy of a kiss making time and separation as if they had not been.

Henriette had shut her eyes to live the moment more fully; and though she, perhaps, was the more profoundly moved of the two, it was she who first returned from the frail paradise of lovers to the harsh fact of the real world. She started from his arms so quickly, striking him on the chest with her open palms as she did so, that he had no time to make even an effort to hold her.

"I thought you were still imprisoned!" she exclaimed, her eyes wide with fear. "How did you escape? And how, how, *how*, did you know I was here?"

"I didn't," Casanova said slowly, as the meaning of the situation gradually flooded his mind like dawn pouring over the desert's rim. "But the question is rather—*why* are you here?"

"For the matter of that," she retorted bravely, though the look of fear deepened in her eyes, "the question might equally be *why* are *you* here?"

"Why?" said Casanova, still speaking slowly as he struggled with the manifold implications still unfolding from this situation. "Perhaps I had better tell you a little about me, and then—and then you can clear up a little on your side."

He paused a minute, gazing at her with wonder and old desire reborn, mingled with deadly uneasiness. Neither of them thought to sit down, but stood facing each other, in the sharp light and shadow of the two peacefully burning candles, which seemed impossibly tranquil in contrast with the tumult of their hearts and minds.

"I did escape from the Leads," he articulated with difficulty, moistening his dry lips, while she watched him with dilating pupils, her hands nervously clasping and unclasping before her breast. "With Marco I tunnelled out of prison, broke into the public offices of the Doge, and reached the Piazza—only to find that it was a trick, we had been discovered and watched all along, and were instantly rearrested. . . ."

"Ah!" Henriette's sympathy was awakened. "After all that effort and courage!"

Casanova shrugged, and then continued, with a dry sarcasm he didn't wholly intend:

"Perhaps we were not the most to be pitied. After two or three days, or more, was it? Ten days, perhaps—I have learned to try to forget time in prison . . . At any rate, I was released. . . ."

"Released!" the surprise, which had left her eyes, returned.

He nodded slowly, watching her, but said nothing.

"Released?" she said again, wonderingly. "But why? How?"

He leaned forward to answer, and the intensity of his emotion drew the lips back from his teeth in a kind of rictus, so that he looked rather devilish to her as she shrank from the fearful verbal slap in the face:

"They released me," he said deliberately, "they released me, and sent me up here, to this place, this inn, this room, to kidnap a woman they said is an Austrian spy!"

Now that it was said, Casanova began to feel much better. What surprised and was far from displeasing him was the discovery that he didn't much care that Henriette was what he had just rather brutally called her. It was, he realized, much more important and to the point that he was her lover and she his mistress. Naturally, Henriette did not have the least inkling of this sudden change of feeling and, naturally also, took his virtuous denunciation at its face value. She flushed.

"So you were ready to buy your liberty at the cost of a woman's torture and death?"

Now Casanova fully realized how disagreeable—to put

it mildly—his own action might look in the eyes of the world, particularly of that feminine half which for him made up far more than half its attraction. And like most people abruptly reminded that they are rather less perfect than they have dramatized themselves to be, Casanova took refuge in anger. He had no time to speak, for the deep silence was troubled by the far-off clatter of a troop of horses coming towards them.

“Oh!” exclaimed Henriette, turning very pale and raising her hands in despair. “If he finds you here, we are both lost!”

“Who?”

“Von Schaumburg.”

“So that is who you’re meeting here secretly—at night—in your bedroom!” said Casanova with ugly jealousy.

“You fool!” Henriette stamped her foot in rage at his stupid egotism. “Can’t you have the wits to know he isn’t and never was and never will be my lover? Don’t you see I’ve been working with him all along over these damned forts . . . ?”

A flash of common sense cleared Casanova’s brain of some of its wool-gathering.

“Will he search the room?” he asked hurriedly, as the tramp of horses’ hoofs suddenly ceased outside.

“No. Why?”

“Hide me in that closet, if he isn’t your lover.”

“But the people of the house will tell him,” she wailed, wringing her hands, “they’re in his pay. . . .”

“The man doesn’t know,” Casanova retorted, “and the woman’s in *my* pay. She’ll hold her tongue for her own sake. Quick now, quick! I hear his step.”

Restored to courage and the power of action, Henriette pushed him into the large built-in closet—once a kind of inner bedroom—and then, remembering everything, stole softly to her seat at the table so that when von Schaumburg knocked and she called softly for him to enter the two candles were burning with perfectly straight tranquil flames. His eyes, from long habit incurably suspicious, noted the fact automatically. Most luckily for Henriette and Casanova the door of the closet, left ajar for air, was com-

pletely in shadow and looked merely like a continuation of the wall—otherwise this most wary of diplomatic foxes would have investigated even that possible trap. . . .

Henriette rose, and curtsied as he entered. He took her hand and kissed it with formal politeness, and then drawing up a chair sat down facing her.

“What are you studying there?” he asked pointing to the document on her table. By way of answer she handed it to him.

“In cipher?” he said, raising his eyebrows in expectation, and then after reading a few lines, in a tone of disappointment and reproof: “But it’s nothing more than an account of your various excursions on our behalf. Do you think it wise to keep this, even in cipher? Why do you want it, anyway?”

“I was reminding myself,” Henriette said quietly, “of how little I was asked at first to do and of how much I have actually performed, of how much on the other hand I was promised at first and how little or nothing I have received. . . .”

The Baron frowned, but remained formally polite

“Need we go into that now? Time presses. . . .”

“I wanted to remind you,” said Henriette, who had her own reasons now for making him talk in Casanova’s hearing of things that Casanova did not know and would believe more readily from von Schaumburg than from Henriette herself. “When I was approached by your emissary, three years ago now, he told me certain alleged facts and made certain proposals. . . .”

“Yes, but . . .” von Schaumburg tried to interrupt.

“I was an orphan and very ignorant,” Henriette insisted, “and I loved and revered the memory of my mother. I didn’t want money and estates, though I was promised them. But I was promised something much more valuable—that in addition to these I should have the inestimable prize of being presented at Court as my mother’s daughter, which would mean that the sentence of disgrace and exile pronounced against her and her descendants for ever had been rescinded. I am not such a fool as to deny that I should be glad to have

back the estates and worldly position to which I am entitled, but knowing how much my mother suffered in her pride, that rehabilitation was what drew me to this—service, can I call it.”

“Well?” said von Schaumburg in a rather surly tone as she paused.

“Well,” Henriette went on, “I was promised that one dangerous mission—oh, I grant, you didn’t conceal the danger—would suffice. It was to take a few weeks. Since then I have carried out dozens, scores of missions, and I am still asked to undertake more, am still no nearer the reward promised me on—let me remind you—the word of honour of a gentleman.”

“Do you deny that you’ve been well paid during these years?” he asked, frowning.

“Paid, yes,” she retorted, “as a secret agent who takes risks is paid. But not as a lady who undertakes a dangerous mission for a great Empress is rewarded. I served more for honour than for . . .”

“I shall tell you,” he interrupted in the arrogant German style. “In the first place, while you certainly have worked with apparent loyalty and . . .”

“Apparent!” Henriette in her turn interrupted haughtily.

“Well, well, I beg your pardon,” he apologized clumsily, “we’ll say with loyalty and energy; but still the unfortunate fact remains that the fortresses are still in the hands of Venice and not in ours.”

“Is that my fault?” Henriette interrupted with vivacity. “Wasn’t it due to the clumsiness of your own plans? Can you lay the blame in the least on *me*?”

“Why, yes, I think I can,” he said calmly but brutally. “That brings me to my second point, and at the same time puts the blame squarely on you.”

“What do you mean?”

“One of the things, I mean,” he said, “is that the Empress can hardly be expected to receive the mistress of a Venetian adventurer.”

“Oh!” Henriette shrank at the insult, and the direct mention of the one person she didn’t want discussed.

"Why should you bring him up?" she murmured ineffectually.

"Because," von Schaumburg pursued his advantage, "from the moment you took up with him, our plans went awry. How do we know he wasn't one of those innumerable swine-dogs of Venetian secret police?"

"The best answer to that is that they arrested him eighteen months ago and have kept him in prison ever since. . . ."

"I wonder," von Schaumburg said slowly and meditatively, "I wonder. In any case, those Venetian blackguards would not have the least compunction in maltreating and imprisoning the most faithful servant if that served their purpose."

"Do they differ so much from other governments?" asked Henriette, with a sweet-toned malice which made Casanova in his hiding place grin silently. Von Schaumburg muttered under his breath, then said suspiciously:

"The Venetians give out that he escaped a few days ago. Have you seen or heard of him?"

Henriette shrugged.

"Do you suppose I should be here, if I had?"

"So you're still in love with him?"

"Why not? Isn't my private life my own?"

"Doubtless," he sneered, "but people cannot be expected to be rewarded by an Empress merely for living their private lives. However, between ourselves, I incline to think the report is a false one, spread by the Venetian government to aid one of their innumerable squalid and senile intrigues. The man has not been recognized anywhere. That I can pretty well swear to, for I've had my agents on the watch. To tell you the truth, I even considered the possibility that he might be here, and brought along a little posse of my own as a precaution."

"Did you expect me to hand him over?"

"Why not?" Von Schaumburg condescended to laugh. "But if he had escaped from prison, I'd have found him somehow. I incline to think he's dangerous—he might pick up secrets from one of my most valued—collaborators."

Henriette shrugged, but made no effort to discredit his insinuation.

"None of this alters the fact that you have not kept faith with me," she said firmly. "If my relations with Casanova meant that the Empress would not receive me, why did you not tell me?"

"Why didn't your common sense tell you?" he retorted. "But I didn't come here to argue with you, Fräulein. I came to bring you two documents, one of which I shall leave with you. . . ."

He handed her a thick envelope from his pocket, which she glanced at.

"More instructions in cipher!" she said with distaste, "What do they involve?"

"Nothing new or dangerous," he said soothingly. "Merely brief visits to Zara and Trieste and perhaps to Cattaro. . . ."

"You cannot be serious!" she exclaimed sharply. "They have seen me in every one of those towns. . . ."

"Ah, but this time you must go in military disguise with a comrade—we'll fix you up something clever."

"Do you seriously think I can still pass as a man?" she asked.

He glanced at her figure, which had developed into a woman's since Casanova surprised her slim girl's body hiding in the bed on the frontier of Tuscany.

"Well, you'll have to risk it," he said. "This time we're bound to succeed, and look . . . !"

He held up a document written in Latin, but refused to let her take it.

"No, no, not yet," he said, "this is a legal conveyance of all your late mother's property within the bounds of the Austrian Empire to her only child, Henriette. You are reinstated as her subject, but, as I have hinted, you can't be received at Court. . . ."

"But—if," Henriette blushed at saying this with Casanova listening, "if—some day—Casanova should be released—and we should marry . . . ?"

"I forgot to say," said the Baron rising, "that there is one

condition attached. It is that you forfeit all claim to this property if you marry, live with or consort in any way with the said Giacomo Casanova. It is inserted at the express orders of her Imperial Majesty."

"And," said Henriette rising and facing him, "suppose I throw your secret instructions back at you, and scorn your documents and conditions . . . ?"

"Why, in that case," said the Baron coolly, "you would immediately go on our list of persons who are to disappear mysteriously. I shouldn't do that if I were you, I really shouldn't."

There was a long pause during which they gazed at each other. Then Henriette picked up the envelope of instructions and tucked it into the bosom of her dress

"Good," said the Baron with satisfaction, "we understand each other. Now, don't be a foolish girl. Carry out your instructions, and I give you my word of honour the property shall be yours. What's more, we'll find you an honest German husband who'll overlook a little fault in consideration of an ample dowry. And who knows? In the next reign, you may yet be received."

To this series of well-meant insults she still had nothing to say, but merely bent her head. He took her hand, and, just as he was about to give it the formal kiss of farewell, remembered something.

"You should have reminded me," he said jovially, "I nearly forgot you'll need money. Here." He brought out three money-bags, which he placed on the table. "Each of those contains two hundred gold sequins—enough for your expenses, for any disguises you adopt, and for the bribes you will find specified in your instructions. Now, adieu." He lifted her unresisting hand carelessly to his lips.

"Good-bye," she said.

"And take my advice—forget there was ever such a person as Casanova," he said, going to the door. "Return to Austrian territory as quickly as you can from Trieste—you'll take that town last, you'll find—and communicate at once with me. . . ."

He was gone, leaving the candles swaying in the wind raised by the smartly shut door. Henriette sank into the seat by the table, gazing fixedly in front of her and listening with peculiar concentration to the sound of von Schaumburg's steps descending the stairs. She—and Casanova in the closet more faintly—heard his voice as he condescended jovially and gutturally to the innkeepers, and they responded with garrulous fawning on so great a guest. Then the outer door slammed, and there was silence.

"Stay where you are!" Henriette commanded imperiously in a low voice, as she heard Casanova rustle in the closet. "Stay absolutely still, until I tell you."

She had not moved in any way as she spoke, but kept her gaze on the table, as if reading the instruction she had taken from her dress. There was a shrill whistle outside, followed by several fainter ones at different distances and intervals, then the trampling of horses, another pause during which they heard Von Schaumburg's voice but could not hear what he said, and then the sound of horses trotting away with fainter and fainter echoes of hoofs until all at last was silent.

"You may come out now," she said, and rose from the table as if to meet him, and then stood, uncertain, hands limply hanging at her sides, and eyes hidden by bent head and drooping lids.

6

HERE was a moment, unique in a man's life, when Casanova had the chance to act simply—and, on its own scale, even grandly—and thus to confirm for ever his dominion over Henriette's love. He had only to plagiarize himself, as it were, to repeat the inspired kiss of his entry, a kiss which said: "Never mind it all or any of them—you are mine, I am yours," and all was solved. For Henriette was Woman, and at that moment above all needed Woman's poor consolation, Man. Hadn't she just played her part readily and skilfully

enough to deserve applause from the only audience in the world that mattered? She had saved her hidden lover from the certain death which would have followed detection; she had proved to that lover that the man with whom she had talked in apparent solitude and helplessness was not and never could have been her lover, as Casanova's recurrent jealousy had suggested. And she had done more—she had compelled Schaumburg partly to tell and wholly to confirm her story, a tale which showed her deceived perhaps, but only deceitful of Casanova insofar as it was absolute necessary for the safety of both—an enemy of Venice his country, no doubt, but loyal to him.

Unluckily Casanova had ceased temporarily to listen to the promptings of the heart, and that prison-cramped mind of his was straining once agile powers to come to grips with this problem and its solution. It was not just the woman that he wanted, but the woman as a kind of trophy of victory in a battle of wits. Instead of going to her and taking her in his arms, he signed to her to sit in the chair von Schaumburg had been using and himself dropped into hers.

He saw, or thought he saw, it all now; and, to do him justice, a certain pity and tenderness touched him for the lonely girl tempted, as such a person most readily might be tempted, through high as well as universal motives into undertaking a dangerous and discreditable task she hadn't fully understood. Once committed, she could not retreat with either safety or honour; and they had exploited and duped her with that merciless cynicism of virtuous governments to which the vilest individual seldom sinks. Nor had she lied to him, except to the extent that hiding an essential part of a truth is lying. Perhaps she had wanted to tell him, but at what time in their brief and troubled life together could she have entrusted him with a secret so crucial? Not before Florence certainly; in Florence how soon he had given her reason to distrust and to withdraw from him; and after Florence he had scarcely emerged from a sort of probation before he was arrested. . . .

And as he sat staring unseeingly at the table in his state

of mental concentration, while Henriette looked at him with such pathos of love struggling against disappointment, the word "arrest" started up a new problem or set of problems. Had that arrest been due to Donna Giulietta, after all? Might it not have been because of—but how could it be for any reason but because he was with Henriette, and the Inquisitors knew what she had lent herself to? Might not his unconscious walking into the police trap, and so setting it off prematurely, have saved her from real gruesome horrors in the prison with its torture chambers? And wasn't it the sort of bitter irony which delighted the inquisitorial mind which had set him this test of loyalty to his country—sent him to seduce his own mistress and to make the discovery that she was the secret agent plotting a fatal blow against the venerable State of Venice?

"Well," he said aloud, moving uneasily in his seat and looking up without meeting her eyes, "what do we do now?"

"Yes," she echoed with a grey toneless bitterness. "What indeed do we do now?"

At that moment Casanova came out of his busy inner struggle and for the first time since emerging from his hiding place really looked at her; and saw that she was fair. It was on the tip of his tongue to say: "Let's go to bed together!" which, if unceremonious and a little brutal, would surely have been better than what, almost involuntarily, he did say:

"Are we in immediate danger?"

The remark was less cowardly than it sounded, because it was accidental, the mere expression of a thought which naturally lurked in the mind of each of them, and was only blurted out by Casanova because the sudden spark of desire momentarily upset his balance. But how was Henriette to know this? She withdrew a little further from him, as she answered:

"How can I say? It all depends on what you mean by danger and what you do. . . ."

Casanova saw the bitter thought in her mind—"he can save himself if he hands me over to Venice"—and saw it aghast. What had he said and done to make her think so

meanly of him? On an impulse—right at last!—he leaned across the narrow little table and clasped one of her hands in his.

“How you have been hurt by life!” he said tenderly, and then with regret: “And how I must have given you cause to mistrust me—knave and fool that I am!”

She shrugged, and withdrew her hand, not wishing to soften to him again so soon.

“There is no need to condemn yourself for being what God made you,” she said, still not without bitterness, but more softly. “I can look after myself—at least, I must. You have to consider your duty to your country and whatever promise you may have given in exchange for release.”

It was now Casanova’s turn to shrug.

“Good, good!” he said sarcastically. “We now have to destroy ourselves in order to keep faith—supposedly—with tyrants and ruffians. By God, Henriette, you annoy me. Do you think any man is bound by a promise extorted under such conditions? Or that a man owes duty to a State which imprisons him as a sort of hobby on its part?”

“Some have thought so.”

“More fools they,” said Casanova emphatically. “I was never one of those who boasted of blind devotion to that abstract boggy tricked up as Providence—the sovereign State. I was content to leave it alone while it left me alone, but when it came to such endearing practices as throwing me to rot in jail because it didn’t like the colour of my eyes . . . Why, Henriette, it is the poorest but the truest compliment I ever paid you to say that your little finger is incalculably more valuable to me than the whole body politic of Venice, including its possessions beyond the Adriatic!”

This was better doctrine to win a woman than kisses omitted and paltry fears of danger. Henriette at last smiled.

“You are very downright about it,” she said, “and perhaps a little unfair. After all, you were consorting— isn’t that the word they use?—with a dangerous foreign spy.”

“They’re such muddle-heads I don’t believe they knew even that,” he cried. “Anyway, who cares?”

"Do you mean that?" she asked significantly. "You really don't mind that, whatever my motives and whatever the compulsion, I *was* actually working to steal those fortresses from Venice for Austria."

"If Venetians have become so degraded or stupid that they can be bribed and swindled out of the bastions of their own power, they deserve to lose them," he retorted impatiently. "Would the Venetians of any other age have been guilty of such . . . ? But why do we waste time on these academic questions? We have our own lives to consider. I would rather you had never had anything to do with this squalid intrigue—but you were a pawn, a girl whose generous feeling was meanly exploited. Anyway, it's all over now."

"How can it be?" she refused to grasp at once the hope he held out to her, though her heart leaped as she guessed his meaning. "Those instructions under your hand on the table tell a different story. I ought to be studying them now, to be ready to start tomorrow."

"Bah!" Casanova looked disgusted. "Do you mean to say you are going to . . . ? But you can't mean it. In any case, I shan't let you."

"How will you stop me?"

"Very simply," he said, speaking now without restraint or over-emphasis. "I shall make love to you, until you promise to come away with me—and with no separation this time."

In spite of herself a smile crossed Henriette's face.

"What are you laughing at?" he asked, quickly. "What is so amusing in that?"

"Aren't you asking me to give up rather a lot?" she inquired, with a glance which showed that she was not in earnest.

"Not a bit of it!" He pretended to take her quite seriously and *au pied de la lettre*. "Even if they returned you your estates, which I doubt, you'd be their slave for ever. . . ."

"You forget the enormous privilege of being presented at Court—to Her Majesty's successor—and the still greater privilege of marrying—you heard it?—an honest German

who will overlook a little fault in consideration of an ample dowry'!"

"Damn his impudence!" said Casanova, vexed but unable to help laughing.

"And then," Henriette turned serious. "If we were to go off as you suggest, shouldn't we be traitors?"

"What! For refusing to do their dirty spy work? And in any case isn't our loyalty to each other first and then to Their Excellencies and Her Majesty? Henriette, men and women loving each other and sticking together is something that's been going on since the dawn of time, and will last until Gabriel blows his post-horn or whatever he does blow. In a thousand years the Republic of Venice and the Holy Roman Empire may cease to exist, but there'll still be lovers—and children. Why do I say a thousand years? They may not last a century."

"Oh!" Henriette, conservative, like a woman, was shocked at the idea of such cataclysmic changes. "But Venice has lasted nearly a thousand years, and Austria is the greatest military power on earth!"

"I don't dispute it," said Casanova doggedly, "but I bet you human nature outlives both. . . ."

"Well, I won't dispute that either," Henriette answered, "but aren't we wasting very precious time, Giacomo—to me as precious as drops of life blood! Suppose I let you make love to me, and succumb, and agree to go with you, and no separation this time—have you forgotten the dangers threatening us from those two governments you abolish so lightheartedly in a mythical future? Where are we to go? Where are we to live? How are we to live? Above all, where and how can we avoid the retaliation of the rulers we've deserted and offended?"

This was a sobering thought or series of thoughts, and brought Casanova back to immediate realities.

"You're right," he said. "Messer Grande threatened me with just such retaliation as you mention if I betrayed my mission. We must be very careful. The arm of Venice is a long one."

"Ahl" Henriette exclaimed contemptuously, "not half as long or a tenth as powerful as Austria's—that's what we have most to fear."

"Well, we won't argue about it," said Casanova, a little taken aback by her conviction and wounded in his local patriotism at the thought of any Power having a more powerful and vindictive secret police than Venice. "This is what I suggest. Let's spend the night here, and tomorrow to my inn—about seven or eight miles from here. I've got a very nice room there, booked and paid for until Thursday, and the people are civil. We can spend a few days there, and then decide where we go, though my own suggestion is Paris. We might take a boat from Genoa to Marseilles. . . ."

"Are you serious?" she asked incredulously.

"What do you mean?" Casanova asked, staring at her. "Of course I am. What's wrong with this plan?"

"Ah, Giacomo, Giacomo! I thought you knew everything, and there is at least one thing—most important to us—about which you evidently know nothing." She looked discouraged, and sat shaking her head dismally as people are apt to do when trying to think their way out of complicated difficulties.

"What don't I know?" asked Casanova in rather offended tones.

"The power and vindictiveness of the Holy Roman Empire. The extraordinary ramifications of its vast secret police, at home and abroad. How do you think I was able to know always so much about you? Simply because I could draw on the information of the Austrian secret police in Italy, who watched you from the moment you came in contact with Schaumburg. How otherwise do you suppose I could have sent you a message to that wineshop in Rome or have known about your relations with Donna Giulietta . . . ?"

"Was it she who denounced me to the State Inquisitors?" Casanova asked humbly, feeling somewhat crushed by this apparent omniscience. . . .

"Donna Giulietta?" She looked surprised at his question.

"What makes you think that?"

"Only that her gondola passed ours during the ceremonies

of the Bucintoro, and I feel sure she recognized me, if not you."

"I never knew that," Henriette exclaimed, genuinely astonished. "I assumed that . . ."

"Ah," Casanova interjected triumphantly, "so there are some things unknown even to the wonderful Austrian secret service!"

"I have no doubt they knew all about that one," Henriette retorted, "but they didn't see fit to tell me about it. It looks to me as if I was under suspicion even then."

"Probably ever since you joined up with me in Florence," said Casanova carelessly, "but this isn't doing much for our plans, is it?"

"If it makes us both cautious, it will have done a good deal. Especially you. Listen, Giacomo. The secret police I want you to understand and fear aren't omniscient, of course. They only watch those they're told to watch, but I happen to be one of the watched as well as a watcher—I suspect all agents are. Those cipher instructions you keep handling as if you want to tear them up, will contain precise instructions of things I am to do, and an equally precise itinerary. Each day I am supposed to leave a certain place and arrive at another, and each day those movements are reported. The moment I fail to arrive at a place, there will be a report and an instant alert to find what has happened to me. If I have been killed or captured by the Venetian Inquisition—that's my look-out, and I'm simply crossed off the book. But if I abandon my mission for reasons of my own . . ."

She was silent and Casanova, who had been listening carefully and with great interest, said impatiently:

"Yes, well, what then? They can't do anything to you in France."

"That's not so certain. I should prefer to go on to England. Remember I am still technically French. But what might happen on the way is the first and greatest danger."

Casanova had nothing to object to that—he knew perfectly well what "might happen".

"You did one very sensible thing . . ." Henriette began.

"I'm glad I did *one!*" cried Casanova.

"There isn't time for any more joking" she said, and then more urgently as he tried to kiss her hand, "nor for flirting. If you are as sincere as I am in meaning that we are to be together. . . ."

"If!" Casanova exclaimed, hurt at the doubt of his motives.

"Well, then, we haven't any time to lose—we've wasted enough in chattering. . . ."

"But we always have so much to say to each other. . . ."

"Not now," she interrupted, "in case it leads to one or both of us having nothing to say for all eternity. We must separate. . . ."

"No, no," he protested. "It's been our fate to live our love in glimpses, strange meetings and swift partings. Even Florence went like a flash of lightning. . . ."

"*Stage* lightning?" asked Henriette, with a smile, and Casanova would have blushed, if he could, at the reference to Marietta. "I'll tell you why we must separate. The inn-keeper here is certainly an agent, otherwise Schaumburg wouldn't have fixed the interview with me here. It will be part of his job to report when I leave here and in what direction, so I must leave at the specified time in the specified direction, and alone. That gives me a day's start, perhaps two."

"And what about me?" Casanova asked, rather aggrieved. "Where do I go? Where do we meet?"

"Do you know the White Lion Inn at Geneva?"

"No, but I can find it," he answered a little petulantly. "But, Henriette, aren't you going to let me spend the night with you?"

"Not unless sleeping with a woman is worth the strong possibility that both would be . . ."

"Ah, but it isn't *a woman*, it's you!" Casanova said, and this time succeeded in kissing her.

"We mustn't start that!" Henriette repulsed him. "It's too dangerous. You must get out of this place at once, as silently as you can, and make for Geneva by way of Milan and the Simplon Pass. If you get there first, wait for me. . . ."

"And don't I even get my things at the other inn here?"

"Better to abandon them. As to the horse, turn it loose in the yard and leave the gate ajar, so that the woman can persuade her husband it's a stray."

"But I must go back to the inn. I left my money there."

"Take half of this," Henriette pointed to the bags left by Schaumburg.

Casanova chuckled.

"I shouldn't mind taking it, but I thought you were too high-minded. . . ."

"It's a poor enough price for my mother's estates," said Henriette quietly.

"Ah! I shouldn't have said that, but the 'poor price' is all the more reason for my recovering the money I have no hesitation in taking from the Venetians."

"It will be dangerous . . ." Henriette began.

"It will be more dangerous not to have enough money," Casanova retorted, "and I shan't be long delayed. In fact I shall start much about the time you do. . . ."

"What shall you do?"

"Take the wretched horse, say I lost my way and the horse its shoe, we both had a tumble. Then start for Milan at dawn."

Henriette stood up.

"Well," she said, "if you're determined to do that, you'd better start at once. We won't say 'good-bye' but '*a rivederci*'."

He took her swiftly in his arms, and held her closely, kissing her mouth and cheeks, which he felt were wet with sudden tears.

"You must go now," she whispered, gently struggling to free herself from his clasp.

"Let me be with you a little while," he pleaded.

"No!"

"Just for an hour."

"No."

"Just once, only once—it has been so long. . . ."

This time if she said "No" again, Casanova did not hear it.

7

"ADVENTURES to the adventurous"—Casanova quoted this favourite saying of his to himself with a certain grimness, as he peered through the rattling side-window of his travelling carriage at the great plain of Lombardy which seemed to be one enormous cistern of damp white fog. Even with postillions who knew the road far better than their catechism the journey to Milan was necessarily a slow one in such thick fog.

The delay did not really worry him, except to the extent that losing time on the easiest stage of the then long, difficult, and even dangerous journey to Geneva was an annoyance. In spite of her surrender to his kisses in the little room of the old inn at the foot of the Stelvio, Henriette had kept full control of their plan of escape and of their meeting at Geneva. She had allotted ten days for their respective journeys, which made the twenty-sixth of the month the day of the rendezvous.

"It doesn't matter how early you get there this time," Henriette had said with a smile, referring to the curious mess Casanova had made over the previous rendezvous at Florence, "but above all, don't be late."

She had repeated this warning with more urgency because Casanova seemed to think that once they were at Geneva there would be nothing more for them to fear; whereas Henriette had an unshakable belief in the extensive, the very extensive powers of the secret police she was deserting. Against this Casanova had an easy retort:

"If it is so important for us to arrive there together at the quickest possible moment, why on earth don't we travel together?"

But Henriette was emphatic—the essential thing was to gain a start in time. Casanova, she felt, was but a novice in this desperate work. True, the Red Inquisitor had threatened him with vengeance if he disclosed what he knew, and might do so perhaps if it were published in a book. But how lightly Casanova was involved in these repulsive state secrets

compared with herself! It was not Venice they had to fear but Austria. If the two of them started off together, it would be reported, and vengeance in the shape of assassins or kidnappers would surely overtake them, official criminals always having transport priority.

For want of anything better to do Casanova thought over all this as the wheels swayed and rattled him along the great highway to Milan. He was still not wholly convinced by Henriette's arguments, and wondered if she were not holding something back from him, telling the truth up to a certain point but not everything, as she had done in Florence and Venice? And indeed his guess was not entirely unfounded. As often happens, these sagacious and prudent plans of hers were apparently founded on a strictly objective view of the facts, but were actually influenced by two subjective emotions. In the first place, she had an almost maternal desire to protect him from possible vengeance in the most dangerous part of the journey, which would be in the early days. And a more subtle motive crept in. She was still not quite able to accept Casanova on the only terms possible to him, terms which were in contradiction with his spoken protests, but which as they were displayed in his acts could be summarized thus: "I do really like you more than any other woman and I shall always return to you, though I can never be faithful to you." At the Swiss inn Casanova had convinced her mind and senses, but he had not wholly regained sway over a sensitive nature hurt by his discreditable affair with Marietta. Almost unconsciously, and yet not so completely so that she wasn't a little aware of what she was doing, Henriette was setting him a test as well as trying to spare him the dangers she must run. If he was there at the rendezvous in time, without frivolous delays of girls kissed or ducats won at *faro*, she would begin to trust him completely again. If not . . .

Could she have seen him on this first stage of the journey she would have found nothing to complain of. In spite of fog he kept going, sleeping in the carriage; and when, as he approached Milan, the fog cleared under a gusty north wind he urged on the postillions, and reached the city barely three

hours behind his schedule. It was not possible to start off again immediately—he would have to send off a mounted messenger to make arrangements for guides and perhaps sleds to cross the pass, so might as well stay for a good meal and a night's sleep before affronting the perils and discomforts of the mountains.

Milan had in store a surprise of vexatious import, which had indeed been foreseen as a possibility but with the strong hope that so early in the winter it might be avoided. As Casanova stepped wearily from his carriage to enter the hotel at Milan his blood, already chilled by the long cold hours of cramped travelling, seemed to turn icier as with lack-lustre eyes he noted a slowly falling snow-flake, followed by another and then others in quicker succession. It meant delay—two days, three days, perhaps more—yet so ample was the time Henriette had allowed that Casanova felt certain he could reach Geneva within the time set. There was nothing for it but to wait as patiently and quietly as possible.

Casanova spent an anxious and sleepless night, rising several times to open his bedroom window, only to have his hopes obliterated each time by a silent swirl of heavy white flakes. In the morning it was still snowing, and Casanova determined to stay in bed until the weather cleared, not only for the obvious purpose of rest and self-indulgence but for prudential reasons—in order not to be recognized. Milan, however, was evidently destined to be the city of disagreeable events as well as delay. The chambermaid who brought Casanova his breakfast was a comely peasant girl with whom, in less anxious circumstances, he would very probably have wished to become a little more intimate. With the breakfast she brought him the Milanese gazette, handing it to him with what under some circumstances he would have described as an "inviting smile", but now mentally ticketed as a "leer".

By way of snubbing her, Casanova put the newspaper carelessly aside and attached himself to preparations for eating a leisurely breakfast in bed. He could not help noticing, with a mixture of flattered vanity and annoyance,

that she was slow in leaving, looking back at him with curious interest. He speculated in an abstract way on the morals of hotel chambermaids, and, as he sipped his coffee and milk, lazily picked up the gazette to see if there was any news. . . .

A convulsive movement spilled coffee on the tray and nearly upset the whole breakfast on the floor, as he saw with incredulous horror that the main item of news was the "arrival" in Milan of the celebrated Casanova whose whereabouts had been unknown since his escape from the infamous Leads prison of Venice. He had been seen and recognized as he entered the hotel, by a Venetian who knew him slightly and had instantly sold the information to a journalist—at least, so Casanova judged from the newspaper's eulogy of his busybody countryman.

What was to be done? In his anxiety and annoyance at this unforeseen new piece of trouble, Casanova jumped out of bed and began to dress—with no very precise idea, except to get away from the hotel and from the city of Milan at once. But the low dark sky scattering down inexorably its multitudes of white feathery snow crystals reminded him of the hopelessness of such a plan. If he moved to another hotel he would not quench curiosity but rather inflame it, and until the snow ceased it was a mere waste of time and energy and money to try to continue his journey. With his chin cupped in his hand he stood at the snow-clogged window in a most melancholy frame of mind, asking himself once more: What was to be done?

As usual, Casanova got his idea. Instead of dressing, he undressed and got back into bed, and violently pulled the bell-rope which hung beside it. The chambermaid entered so quickly that Casanova was inclined to think she had been watching through the key-hole. However, he put on a convincing act of groans and twitches, informed the girl that he had been suddenly taken ill, ordered her to take away his breakfast, and to send at once for a physician, with insistence that nobody else was to be allowed to enter his bedroom except the proprietor.

To that alarmed personage, who came galloping up to avert that hotel disaster, a death in the house, Casanova explained that he was subject to little digestive spasms and would soon be well, sending him away pacified with a little extra money. To the doctor Casanova complained of sleepless nights and fiendish nightmares when he did doze, and received some silly advice, a sleeping draught, and valuable aid in the shape of an order that the patient was to sleep and not to be disturbed. Him too, Casanova made happy with a little gold.

Thus protected Casanova had time to think over the situation and to re-read carefully the newspaper story. Reflection convinced him that this was probably not nearly so disastrous as he had thought at first. The details about himself were vague and in some cases flagrantly untrue, while even the identification was left unproved to anyone reading the words critically. Casanova remembered the Inquisitor telling him of the many newspaper articles and pseudo-Casanova impostors who had appeared even before he left prison. One more probably didn't matter much, provided he could manage to avoid any positive identification.

And still the snow fell, until in the late afternoon, Casanova observed that it was thinning perceptibly though gradually. Within an hour the snow-storm had diminished so much that Casanova felt convinced he would be able to start about midnight. He, therefore, wrote a letter to the hotel proprietor saying he was better, reiterating that he was not to be disturbed, ordering the messenger to be sent off at once to arrange the mountain crossing, and commanding that horses be ready for his own carriage at midnight. Inconvenient and chilly as this would be, Casanova felt it necessary in order to make his get-away without further recognition and annoyance. By way of passing the time and also of preparing for at least two and probably three days of travel when washing would be impossible, he had a bath and shaved carefully. He was by now so hungry that he was compelled to eat something, and then went back to bed to doze away the time until he had to dress for the journey.

He was awakened from a light sleep by the sound of the chamber-maid's pass-key in the lock, the opening of the door, and in spite of Casanova's tip—neutralized evidently by a much larger tip—by her voice saying brazenly and to his dismay:

"Somebody to see you, sir!"

Casanova started up in bed, as the door shut and locked behind the person who had entered, and by the light of his dimly-burning taper saw that the person was a woman and, with a throb of his heart, that it was Donna Giulietta. For a few seconds both were silent, Casanova staring at her with feelings which may be imagined, she looking down at his startled dismayed countenance with a smile. She let the heavy fur cloak wrapped around her fall from her shoulders, as she said:

"So Giacomo Licinio is Giacomo Casanova! Who would imagine a gazette-writer telling the truth?"

"Madame!" said Casanova trying to steady a voice which trembled with exasperation. "You have forced your way into my bedroom! I must ask you to leave at once! Immediately!"

"You know something about leaving bedrooms in a rush, don't you?" she retorted, and, then, looking around, "I won't ask you to get up in your nightshirt and find me a chair—that might shock your modesty . . . ah, here's a chair!"

She found and dragged a small arm-chair to within a couple of yards of the bedside, and seated herself with a nonchalance which seemed to Casanova insulting, not to say threatening. Here indeed was a witness who could testify to having seen the escaped Casanova, and one from whom he could hardly expect a friendly silence. He still protested:

"But this is an intrusion, Donna Giulietta. . . ."

"Ah, that's better," she said coolly, producing her inevitable fan from the hollow of a large fur muff, "'Donna Giulietta' is a great advance on 'Madame'."

And though it was certainly not over-warm in the bedroom, she fanned herself as negligently and provocatively as if seated in the *Acquaviva salone*.

"Don't think you can escape public attention by hiding away like a misanthrope. Don't you know you're famous? There are at least a dozen people waiting to see you in the hope that you really are you—and they relieve each other in relays. It's very amusing to see how your quite faithful friend, the proprietor, swears you are Licinio the wine merchant."

Casanova allowed her to run on in her bantering style. He had managed to dominate his annoyance, and was doing some fast thinking while he watched her. If he did what he had intended to do and indeed had a perfect right to do—that is, take her by the shoulders, thrust her out into the corridor, and lock his door in her face—he was setting loose an enemy to proclaim exactly what he wanted to keep silent—namely, that he was in Milan and about to journey northwards. Somehow, he decided, he must manage to keep her with him until it was time for him to start, and then have some device ready to give her the slip before she could communicate with anyone or find out in which direction he was travelling.

"Why are you so silent?" she said, pouting a little. "Don't sulk with me, Casanova. I dislike it so much, and it doesn't become you. Besides, I came here in the friendliest of moods to congratulate you on your daring and successful escape from the Leads."

"After having got me put there," he added sardonically.

If Casanova expected her to be disconcerted by this point-blank shot he was wholly mistaken. She merely smiled and said:

"So they told you that, did they? What makes you think it true?"

"I know it's true."

"Suppose I should deny it?"

"I shouldn't believe you."

"Would you be so ungallant?"

"In this case I should be just as ungallant as you were treacherous and . . ."

"Suppose I persisted?"

Casanova shrugged his shoulders.

"Suppose we talk of something else," he suggested gruffly. "For instance, what do you want with me? You can't betray me to the secret police here, you know."

She closed her fan, and looked at him thoughtfully.

"You have a great deal of spirit, Casanova," she said. "A great deal of spirit. I don't wonder so many women are willing to put up with so much for your favours. . . ."

"You haven't answered my question," he interposed disdainfully.

"But it can't be said that fine manners are among your good points," she continued.

"Since when have intruders been received with ceremony?" he asked dryly.

"Not even when they're women?"

"No."

"Pretty women in love?"

"Well, perhaps, sometimes. . . ."

"Ah! Now you've made that concession, rather ungraciously, I vow, but still a concession, I will tell you that my reason for 'intruding' was to make certain that—you were you."

"It seems scarcely worth the trouble, does it?" he remarked, sneering a little. "But I'm flattered by the attention."

She gave him a little mocking bow of acknowledgement, and sat smiling at him over her reopened fan. She had thrown back her thick fur wrap and dropped her muff and gloves on the floor, and showed herself dressed in a fashionable autumn gown of brown and green with lace at the throat and wrists. She sat with her knees crossed, showing a foot shod with a fur-topped boot and slender ankle. There was a pause in their talk, as each pursued his own thoughts. Casanova was wondering by what pretexts he could continue to delay her after a reception so ungracious that at any moment she might choose to leave and spread the news. But what was she thinking?

"Giacomo!" she said abruptly, and then interrupted herself to ask charmingly, "may I call you 'Giacomo'?"

"Certainly."

"Thank you. Now that we are together again, I've something to ask you before I leave."

"What is it?" Casanova replied as affably as he could contrive, at the same time trying to think of something plausible to keep her until nearly midnight. . . .

"I mustn't stay long, you know," she said with a smile, "you who have lost them so many are apt to forget that women have reputations."

"You needn't worry about me," said Casanova, anxious to say anything to keep time moving, "I'm harmless to any woman at the moment. Publicly I'm supposed to be at death's door."

"But there's nothing the matter with you, of course?"

"Of course not!"

"Still," she added, laughing, "even in that state I doubt if any woman's reputation is safe with you, such is your reputation—or lack of it."

"The world maligns me," he complained.

"So each one of us thinks of himself or herself, especially herself. The world is not fair. It admires a man who can attract and take mistresses. It shuts its doors on the women."

"But the women sometimes take their revenge, rather savagely," he said meaningly, but she did not seem to hear his remark, or did not want to take it up.

"Were you ever jealous, Giacomo?" she asked.

"Is that the question?" he parried.

"Yes, I really want to know. They tell me that men who have mistresses and go from woman to woman, lose the capacity for jealousy. Is that true?"

"It may be in some cases," he hedged, "but perhaps not in all."

"Is it true of you?"

"No."

"You have been jealous, then?"

"Oh yes, indeed I have."

"And has jealousy ever made you do something you afterwards bitterly regretted?"

"I suppose so," he answered, growing restive under this questioning.

"Suppose you, who never fail with a woman, had had this experience. Suppose that you passionately wanted a woman and that just when you had reached the point of enjoying her she suddenly deserted you for another man? and suppose some time after you suddenly came upon her, happy, almost in the arms of the man, and you suddenly knew that was your rival, wouldn't you be jealous?"

Casanova saw where this was leading, but could make no answer but:

"Yes."

"Yes!" Donna Guilietta continued warmly, and jumping to her feet in her animation. "Yes, indeed you would be jealous as you thought of her lying naked in his arms every night while you were defrauded of just that pleasure, promised first to you! Wouldn't you feel revengeful?"

"I might," he admitted, not wanting to provoke her to any state of anger which might cause her to rush out of the room, but trying to avoid a dangerous admission.

"Of course you would!" she exclaimed, her colour heightening and her eyes sparkling with animation. "Of course you would! And so would anyone, man or woman, with warm flesh and generous blood! Ah, Giacomo . . ." And to the trouble of his senses and his embarrassment she seated herself on the bed beside him, took his hands in hers, and brought her face close to his as she gazed earnestly into his eyes. "Ah, Giacomo, if only you could forgive me what I can never forgive myself! How could I have done so base, so cruel a thing to the man I loved more than any I've known?"

There were tears in her lovely eyes as she looked pleadingly into Casanova's face, leaning over him as he lay propped on pillows. After the long months of enforced chastity in prison her perfume, the shining of her hair, her words, the delicate red and white of her face, above all the pressure of her hip against his side as she sat, all these were like irresistible intoxicants to a drunkard temporarily enforced to abstinence.

He tried to fight off the impression, tried to defend himself from the gusts of desire violently driving over him, tried to summon strength to thrust her away, but the voice seemed to hypnotize him:

"If you knew how many tears I've shed for you, how many sleepless nights of remorse and misery I've spent over you! They're nothing, I know, in comparison with what you endured. I can see the suffering in your eyes and face, and it's part of my punishment that the man I love hates me more than anything on earth. If only I could try to make up to you a little of what I've done. I'd be your servant, your . . ."

The sentence was never concluded, for instead of a word the sweet pleading lips formed a kiss on Casanova's mouth. Up till that moment, though he had guessed what was coming, he was nerving himself to resist, to throw her off, at any risk to denounce her as treacherous, hypocritical . . . but the caressing touch of those soft warm lips on his paralysed his will and fired him with a wild flame of desire. Before his mind could even frame a protest, he had caught her in his arms, pressing her yielding body close to his, and covering her with passionate kisses. . . .

How long had passed neither of them knew when there came a timid tap at the door. There was no answer, and the tap was repeated more loudly, and then again more loudly and more insistently. Behind the shelter of the door the room was a medley of female garments cast off at random, and the bed, dimly lighted by a mere spark of night-light, was a tumult of tossed clothes.

"What is it?" called Casanova's voice, gruff with annoyance at being interrupted, and seemingly muffled by something.

"The horses are waiting for you, sir," said the chambermaid's voice. "It's midnight, and a fine, clear . . ."

"Go away!" A clear imperious woman's voice answered her. "Tell them to put the horses back in the stable, and nobody is to come to this door until rung for. You understand?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the chambermaid.

A TRAVELLING carriage with two horses and an out-rider was going at a furious speed along the road which fringes Lac Lemman, in the direction of Geneva which could already be seen in the distance. Inside the carriage sat a haggard man, with eyes red and puffed from lack of sleep, and a four-day beard. The man held a watch in his hand, which he kept glancing at with wild impatience and then, putting his head to the window, shouted to the postillions to drive faster, faster, faster! He was gaining minutes indeed on the usual time, but what was that to someone who was three days late?

The carriage rattled into the courtyard of the White Lion, and the postillions pulled up the steaming horses with a clatter of hoofs, cracking whips, and oaths. Throwing them a handful of money Casanova rushed up the steps into the hotel, meeting the proprietor who had come bustling out to see what all the upset was about. Casanova begged a moment's conference with him, and once the door of the stuffy little office had closed behind them, clutched the man's arm as he asked eagerly:

"Have you any letters for Giacomo Casanova?"

"No, sir," said the proprietor, starting, and gazing with interest at the man whose escape from the Leads had made him notorious wherever there was a newspaper.

"Any message of any kind?"

"No, sir."

"Listen. Forgive my insistence. It is most tragically important. Have you had as a guest a lady, by the name of Anne or Henriette d'Arci or Casanova or any name, who was . . ." and he rattled off a description of Henriette as exactly and objectively as he could make it.

"We have had a lady somewhat answering to that description . . ." the man began cautiously.

"And where is she? Is she here? Take me to her at once."

"She's gone, sir," the hotel-keeper said, shaking his head.

"Gone! I knew it!" Casanova dropped into a chair, and

covered his face with his hands. There was a long silence, during which the host first stared at this famous and over-excited guest, and then, taking out the register of hotel guests, began turning over the pages. As abruptly as he had sat down, Casanova sprang to his feet:

"Tell me what you know about her," he asked, his haggard face covered with beads of sweat, though the weather was cold enough.

"She arrived five days ago," said the innkeeper methodically, "and registered—see, here it is—Henriette Maisonneuve. . . ."

"My name in French!" Casanova muttered, his face distorted by a spasm of anguish. "What then?"

"She took a room and had all her meals served there, went out only at night for a short walk and came back within the hour. She received no letters and drank no wine. She gave orders that nobody was to be brought to her room. She spent the whole day, sir," the hotel-keeper went on, dropping his voice in awe, "sitting at her window, watching every travelling carriage and every vehicle, you might say, that came along the road—for four mortal days, sir."

"Go on," Casanova managed to say hoarsely.

"Yesterday evening, four men arrived and began asking for a lady or a lady and gentleman—describing her and you. . . ."

"What sort of men?" Casanova interrupted.

"Well," the man scratched his head awkwardly. "They talked German, but I'd swear they weren't from any of our Swiss cantons. Foreigners, I'd say. Anyway, I told them she wasn't receiving anyone, but they rounded on me and threatened me with the police if I interfered. I tried to protest, but they made me take them to her room."

"And then what?"

"I don't know, sir, at least it hardly seemed possible. When she saw them she turned very pale, but got up and said, 'So you've come for me?' 'Yes, we've come for you', said one of them, very grim and threatening, I thought. I'd have liked to dot him one for talking to a woman like that. . . ."

"Never mind that. What happened next?"

"She said she was willing to go, and indeed, sir, she did seem in a hurry to get away. . . ."

"Trying to save me . . ." Casanova murmured.

"Then she asked for just two minutes to herself, before going; and after a lot of arguing they agreed."

The hotel-keeper was silent, and looked at Casanova with round troubled eyes, evidently unhappy about what he had been unable or too timid to prevent.

"Well, what else?" Casanova asked.

"That's all, sir. They went away, two of them in the carriage with her, as if she was under guard like. Later in the day, we found she'd written something on the window pane with a diamond."

"Take me to see it."

Casanova followed the hotel-keeper up a flight of spotless stairs and along a corridor which reeked with Swiss cleanliness.

"This is the room, sir," said the man, opening a door, and Casanova paused on the threshold, thinking of the long agony of waiting Henriette had suffered in that room while he lay in bed with Donna Giulietta, of the sudden anguish and bitter taste of despair and death that must have risen to her lips when the avenging brutes caught up with her. If he had been one day late, or even two days late, it would still not have been too late.

He went forward into the room, stood there a moment, and then walked to the window. On one of the small square panes he read through tears the last of her laconic messages:

"Adieu my love, Henriette."

THE END



ALLAMA IQBAL LIBRARY



1082

